



SELECTIONS  
FROM  
COWPER'S POEMS





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WITH A INTRODUCTION BY  
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• London  
MACMILLAN AND CO  
1883

*Printed by R & R. CLARK, Edinburgh*

## PREFACE

THE fame of Cowper, like that of every other poet worthy to be reckoned among the foremost names of literature, has gone through various vicissitudes. The ups and downs of changing taste are indeed the tests of real reputation, and it is only the names that re-emerge, with lustre changed, perhaps, but scarcely dimmed, from the cold shades of neglect and forgetfulness, that are worthy to be inscribed on the national roll as a lasting glory and honour to the language. There are many who enjoy a very agreeable reputation in their own day to whom this ordeal is fatal, and there are few things at once more humbling and more comical than the juxtaposition of names which now and then a critical generation will make, to its own confusion. Thus Shenstone and even Rowe have been in their day coupled with Shakespeare, and Dante was once considered a rude and barbarous rhymster in the sublime presence of Lorenzo dei Medici. Cowper, who has no such rank, has, however, suffered like his greater brethren by the changes of popular feeling, and has gone out of fashion all the more completely for the temporary causes which at his outset added to his fame. There are almost always some adventitious circumstances to increase the due weight of poetic merit with the poet's contemporaries. The mere fact that they are contemporaries gives his generation an interest in him, besides the more true effect of a mind fashioned by the same influences, and probably moving in a line of thought harmonious with

their own. In this there is nothing that detracts from the common interest of mankind, but rather a charm and attraction additional, an individuality which gives character to the general. Shakespeare is true Elizabethan but he is still truer man, and the large and noble atmosphere of a magnificent age adds something to, but never impairs, the humanity which we all share. Even Pope, the exponent of so much less heroic a period, loses but little from the fact that his ways of thinking and the very air he breathes are different from ours. And when the adventitious circumstances which enhance the poetry at its first bursting forth are personal, as in such a case as Byron's, the passing away of their temporary influence takes nothing from the true merit upon which every final verdict has to be founded. If we are not carried away by enthusiasm for the beautiful young peer and hero, we can still understand the state of mind of those who were so, and, though unimpressed ourselves, can comprehend sympathetically how his first readers were impressed. But Cowper is under the action of a different class of influences. The temporary advantage which enhanced his work to his generation was neither that of personal attractiveness nor of general harmony with his age. He represented, indeed, and afforded utterance to a large party in his age, binding willing fetters upon his gentle genius to make himself more and more its spokesman and exponent. His hope and ambition was to be the poet of religion—and that not of religion in the broadest sense, not of divine Christianity in its largeness and fulness, but of the special form of religion which a special revival of interest in sacred subjects at a moment of much profanity and vice had called forth. The faith, not even of Calvin, but of John Newton, represented Christianity to Cowper's eyes. He knew no kind of piety but that which was dictated by this form of doctrine, and he tutored himself to be its interpreter to the world which loved verse better than sermons. Immediately he had his reward, he was admitted not only by the lovers of poetry into the sacred

circle of the poets ; but he was warmly hailed and adopted by the myriads who know nothing about literature, yet love above all things to have their own sentiments uttered for them in the language of verse. When it occurs to poetry to be placed beside his Bible by the devout reader's bedside, it has reached a height at which no critical standards have any sway. The writers who attain this eminence are seldom great, they are usually devout hymnsters, authors of verses real enough to strike a responsive note in pious hearts, though without any value in art. But when by chance a true poet reaches this position, his fame, for the moment at least, is beyond measure. Keble, in our own generation, has reached it by the strength of an inspiration which is the same in its source but entirely different in its manifestation from that of Cowper, and what poet has reached so suddenly and easily anything like the universal popularity of the *Christian Year*?

This, however, which adds so immensely to immediate appreciation, is bad for the future. Keble may not suffer, he is so much less than Cowper in intrinsic merit, that if he loses this standing ground, no other will be left of appreciable magnitude, and he must go altogether if he fails at all. But at the same time he is far safer than Cowper, inasmuch as his is the romance of religion, with many picturesque elements in it, of Gothic architecture, and fine music, and beautiful ritual, besides its all pervading devotion. Even were the faith of the Evangelical party to return again, as perhaps, after the long reign of free thinking and over-liberality, it may do, the pious sentiment of Keble would still keep him afloat. But Cowper has little chance of gaining toleration either from the High Church or the indifferent world. For his religiousness is of a far more rigid kind. Though he can see, none better, the love of God in the smile of nature, and point out the innocent homage of creation to its Maker, yet he cannot permit us to join in that homage without a distinct profession of faith. He will allow no general statements, no vague

hopes, but will drive us to account for our belief before he will allow that we have any chance at all. He and his fellow-believers were in the position of being very sure of every tenet they held. Doubt to them was sin, to be sternly crushed upon the threshold of the mind, not gently encouraged and applauded as an almost virtue. The fires of hell blazed to them upon the very confines of this world, only to be escaped by a flight which, if not accomplished to day, it might be too late to make to morrow. The "fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins," which horrifies us now as with an image at once disgusting and profane, was to them a reverent and loving description of the chief object of faith. It is impossible to imagine a more complete change of phraseology and sentiment than that which has passed over even the section of the Church most near in its views to those entertained by Cowper. Everything has been relaxed, doctrine and statement, and the requirements of orthodoxy, and the practice of the devout. Those who are the very descendants of his teachers and leaders pass with a shudder over his denunciations, or explain them away on the ground of insanity and a mind unhinged. But there was no insanity in Cowper's doctrine, though in his personal application of it there might be much. Whitfield had preached the same, Newton enforced it in a world of fiery sermons, and Wilberforce reasoned with the world over it, with a logic that thousands found irresistible. It was the utterance of the highest religious earnestness of the time. We are not so earnest in any thing nowadays as they were in their determination not to bate a word, not to soften a threat, to warn every man that his soul was forfeit, and that we must not lose a moment in fleeing from the wrath to come. We have lost much of the earnestness, perhaps something of the religion, in our tendency to soften every possible expression, and admit every gentler interpretation, and make the best of our case instead of the worst, as they thought it necessary to do.

It is this extraordinary change in the tone of religious thought which more than anything else has set Cowper at a disadvantage. Those descriptions of nature in which nobody has surpassed the gentle poet of Olney, and those delightful domestic scenes in which nobody has equalled him, can never cease to charm the candid reader. There is an absolute truth in these pictures, a daring adherence to what he sees, in which the timid poet shows an independence and boldness unknown not only in his own day, but even in the after-age, which, moulded unconsciously by his example, and by the breach of tradition which he accomplished, made plainness of language into a system, and threw off ostentatiously the bonds which poetry has always worn, the more exalted diction, the choice of high effects and avoidance of the ordinary which has been with her an article of faith. This faith Cowper abandoned even more entirely than his successor Wordsworth, who formulated the rebellion. Most people have forgotten, and Wordsworth altogether ignored, this precedent, partly in his intense and narrow vision remaining unconscious of his predecessor, his eyes being so closely fixed upon his own theory and so convinced of its originality that he was scarcely cognisant of what had been done before him. But Cowper's self-emancipation from the ornate words of ancient use and wont and the more elevated themes supposed to be essential to poetry was more complete even than Wordsworth's. He had no notion that his system was a new one, nor purpose of establishing a changed rule in the canons of poetry. Indeed his own poetic successes and fame have an accidental character altogether, as things which were never calculated upon in his own conception of his life, but stumbled into unawares in his endeavours to escape from the enemies of his peace. In this attempt he was not responsible to any critical tribunal, nor did he occupy his attention with any precedent. To keep his particular demons at bay, to fill up the languid hours of an idle life, was the declared motive of his great

poem, *The Task*, and as it is chiefly upon this poem that his position as an original power in poetry is founded, we may confine our observations to that remarkable work. His position in it is quite individual and peculiar. It may be worth the reader's while to contrast it with that of Gray who went before him and Wordsworth who came after him.

There never was a more exquisite evening landscape than that which Gray has painted for us, in the dim and pensive tints that become the hour. The twilight painters who have now grown to a school, the English Mason, the French Corot, and so many more, have nothing that is equal to the soft waning of the light, the balmy dimness, the falling dews and shadows, the faint sounds of "parting day"—in this wonderful picture. True in every half tint to the hour and the scene, it is yet so suffused with the atmosphere of imagination and poetry that we might be content to choose it as a symbol of the indescribable and infinite difference between mere prose fact and poetical truth. It embodies not only the scene but the sentiment—the wistfulness, the sadness, the regret, which are the natural accompaniments in the heart of the end of day. It is sometimes supposed that it owes half its popularity to its subject, and Gray himself is reported, in a kind of anger with his own fame, to have said so foolishly, we think, as well resent the delight with which we look upon the work of a great painter, because, if he has done nobly, it is Nature we think of first and not the hand that has rendered her. It is very unlikely indeed that the ordinary observer placed in a country churchyard at the close of a summer day would think of the buried capabilities under these swellings of the turf. He would think of the wicked who cease from troubling and the weary who are at rest, and perhaps, if his soul was touched with tender association, with some thrill of awe and self reflection, would remember that the "poor inhabitants below" had once been as himself, and that he too by and by would be as they. But to the poet there

occurs another thought: The day that is dead and has not brought what it might, the life which when it ends like the day will breathe away with a sense of incompleteness, still lingering upon the warm precincts of the cheerful day, and casting a longing look behind, suggests to him the depths of finer meaning that are here buried in death and never have found expression at all. All those many nameless heroes culminate to him in the thought of the mute Englishman, Master, the village Hampden, the poets who have never sung, the conquerors who have never fought. It is the most profound expression of the wistfulness of the hour, the pain and regret, the unfulfilment, which gives to life its most prevailing sadness—although in its liquid smoothness and grace, we who are so close take the poem with a kind of condescension, as a piece of melody and a little more. But it is not a simple representation of nature. Gray is not limited to give us what he sees and no more. To Dante the same falling shadows and dying light, with the sound dropping through of the convent bell, the "carcer which tolls the knell of parting day," the "squilla di lontano, che per il giorno pianger che è more," suggests the faithful voyagers at sea, who that day, have bidden farewell to gentle friends. And next to the exquisite harmony of the idea with the scene penetrates all hearts. In both the landscape only moves us when it has got its human soul.

We need not enter with the same detail into the sentiment of Wordsworth, which everybody knows. His landscapes are all full of human feeling. The progress of life, the development of the austere and lofty virtues that harmonise with his mountains, the noble if sometimes strained philosophy with which he fits in evil and good to his scheme of the universe, mingle with every one of the many presentations of nature which it is his special office to set before us. He is never a painter merely, nor is it in any case only the landscape that his pencil draws. It is always instinct with morality, and

sentiment, with the development of human feeling and the life of thought

But Cowper stands before us in a gentle originality which is less profound indeed, but more simple, more disinterested than any of these. "The language of genuine poetry," says Mr. Matthew Arnold with a reference to Wordsworth's criticism of Dryden, "is the language of one composing with his eye on the object." The poets to whom we have referred did this, but they did something more—they had their eye on further visions, on spiritual objects shadowing forth beyond the real. Cowper is among them the only real landscape painter, whose eye seeks no other depths but that of the air about him, who is content with the horizon he sees, and paints us things as they are. Out of a world all rustling with mythologies, from which Gray only escapes by intervals, he walks, straight forward and simple, into a scene which he will trick out in no adventitious interest. Of all men he was the one most concerned to put a moral to every word he wrote—it was no wish to banish humanity from his picture that moved him. Indeed, whenever a human figure comes in his way he puts it in with a realistic force that is delightful. It is perhaps more difficult to explain why we should be charmed by the picture of the woodman and his dog crossing the wintry landscape, than it is to understand the interest of the imagination in the suggestions of the *Elegy*, or the revelations of high human virtue, sorrow, or weariness, which people Wordsworth's mountain glens and hamlets. Yet so it is. And Cowper was the first to institute this manner of composition in his age. His eye was always on the object. A recent critic makes the curious statement that Cowper was one of those who enforced the idea that society and not nature was the first object of study. This opinion may have taken its rise in those earlier productions in which his ambition was to play "the monitor's if not the poet's part," and enlighten mankind as to their best interests—but could

not be founded upon any knowledge of Cowper's greater work. Here nature is all in all—there is no *arrière pensée* in his descriptions and breezy broad landscapes. By times indeed he turns aside altogether and sermonises for pages together. But these are digressions from his subject. The landscapes of *The Task* are facsimiles of the landscapes before him, the objects which he had always under his eye. He put down what he found there with a minuteness and exactness in which no looker-on can be deceived. In those direct and sunbright pictures he seldom moralises, he seeks no aid of human sentiment. He paints what he sees with a fine instinct of all that is in the picture, with none of the hardness of a photograph, but with something of its unsparing fidelity, seeing everything. He had not the help of any philosophical theory as to the equality of all subjects, and the necessity of treating everything impartially in verse, but he did it without the theory, and far more boldly than the theorist himself ever attempted to do. Who but Cowper has ever ventured to make immortal a dog—a dog not clothed in sentiment, not the emblem of fidelity, not enshrined in any dumb pathetic manifestation of love to man,—a mere fourfooted creature, in the energy of movement and life?

“ Shaggy and lean and shrewd, with pointed ears,  
And tail cropped short,—half lurcher and half cur,  
His dog attends him. Close behind his heel  
Now creeps he slow and now with many a frisk,  
Wide scampering, snatches up the drifted snow  
With ivory teeth, or ploughs it with his snout,  
Then shakes his powder'd coat and barks for joy

A child would laugh with pleasure at this description—and when we read it it gives us a distinct sense of gratification, of recognition, of kindly sympathy, and yet there is no approach to human sentiment in it, nothing but a reproduction of what was under his eyes. The frosty landscape comes all before us, with the ring of this bark of joy in its thin and nipping air. We smell

the woodman's tobacco which he adjusts "with pressure of his thumb," as he goes forth "unconcerned," crossing our way. These are not sublime images, nor do they demand the aid of splendid diction. They are so real that they ought to be prosaic, matter-of-fact, unpoetical. But they are not unpoetical, they are immortal. Nothing can push that barking cur out of literature, except the collapse of literature altogether. After a hundred years we are still exhilarated by his aimless delight as he ploughs up the snow—and watch his master going out to his work as if it had been yesterday, with the friendliest toleration of "the short tube that fumes beneath his nose." To define exactly how it is that this picture so charms us would be a delicate task for any critic. It is easy enough to explain the fascination of the *Elegy*, and the deserted hut of Margaret in the *Excursion*, or the light shining in the cottage window over a whole glen in love and patience, to guide a wanderer home—"which shepherds call the evening star"—touch a chord which responds on the moment. But the charm of the other is at once more subtle and more simple—a delight in reality, in the permanence of a picture which has pleased us by moments, and taken us out of ourselves—in the long faithfulness of the world to the same everyday incidents and innocent sensations. Are these the causes of our pleasure? We cannot account for it in any other way.

Cowper pushed this experiment of his upon human interest very far. It was no experiment so far as his consciousness was concerned. He saw all the minutiae of the landscape with eyes full of humorous and genial observation, beguiled out of his own miseries by the sight, the air, the distance, the rural sounds, even the strange show of his own shadow "splindling into longitude immense," the few rare rustic figures passing by, gave him a faint yet perfect pleasure, a grateful sense of relief. So long as he was out of doors and his thoughts thus withdrawn from himself, he found existence a possibility. This and not any idea of what was permissible in poetry

was his meaning. He had tried their effect doubly upon himself before he tried it upon his readers, and there was nothing meretricious about that effect, nothing untrue. It was altogether genuine, natural, unforced, with no false elements in it. His picture gallery extends as we accompany him on, but always continues in the same level. He condescends to no fiction, no subliming influences. Here comes trudging through the night the waggoner, "in pond'rous boots beside his steaming team," the waggon, a moving hill of snow, the horses with wide-expanded nostrils and he with "half-shut eyes, and puckered cheeks, and teeth presented bare against the storm," or we watch the cottage child going home through the twilight with one small candle "dangled along at the cold finger's end," or bolder picture still, the thievish sparrows fluttering about the highroad, "lean pensioners upon the traveller's track," while among the woods—

"The redbreast warbles still, but is content  
With slender notes and more than half suppressed,  
Pleased with his solitude, and flitting light  
From spray to spray, where'er he rests he shakes  
From many a twig the pendant drops of ice,  
That tinkle in the withered leaves below."

- How simple are all these descriptions, how devoid of every foreign charm! Neither story nor sentiment is in them—no reflection of the poet's mood nor invitation to the reader's fancy yet something so wholesome and fresh in its living reality, that though the effect may not be so lofty as when our souls are stirred, it is almost more good, more refreshing, a more sensible advantage and relief. Nature is exquisite in every page, not tricked out in human imaginations, but sober-sweet in her own everlasting calm. This was what healed the troubled spirit of the writer himself when works and ways of men were all distasteful to him, and everything out of joint. From the very directness of the effect upon himself he seems to bring the power of that faithful, tender

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portraiture which has all the unity and completeness of a picture without any disturbing reflection of man or his emotions in it. The art is a very rare one. There is nothing strained, nothing extravagant in it, all is toned to the very accent of Nature, her moderation, her fidelity, her freshness, and calm. Nor is there anything in the subject itself to heighten feeling. It has neither mountains nor oceans, no exciting magnitude or grandeur, no glory of tropical sunshine or dazzling colour of the South. The country which breathes about us so fresh and dewy is the homeliest English country—flat fields, and hedgerows, and slow flowing rivers—

' Here Ouse, slow winding through a level plain  
Of spacious meads, with cattle sprinkled o'er,  
Conducts the eye along his sinuous course,

While far beyond, and overthwart the stream  
That as with molten glass inlays the vale,  
The sloping land recedes into the clouds,  
Displaying on its varied side the grace  
Of hedgerows beauties numberless, square tower,  
Tall spire—from which the sound of cheerful bells  
Just modulates upon the listening ear,—  
Groves, heaths, and smoking villages remote "

We have specially lingered upon this characteristic of Cowper's genius, since it is in our opinion almost the most remarkable of his gifts. No change of sentiment can ever make those landscapes old fashioned, or take from them their balm and sweetness. These genuine transcripts of Nature have a similar effect upon the mind that Nature herself has when we plunge into her sweet and fresh and cool recesses. Their influence is always wholesome, restoring, purifying, and they are very nearly, if not altogether, unique in their extraordinary simplicity and truth.

This is not to say that Cowper banishes himself from the panorama of his surrounding fields and pastures. On the contrary, his personality is everywhere, and his

reflections upon all subjects break in continually, flowing into monologue, into endless exhortations and addresses to the world. It is himself and his thinkings, his opinions on all subjects, his moral indignations and religious fervours, that occupy the poem, sometimes wearying our minds and sometimes arresting our sympathies. This being the case, it is almost more remarkable that he should be able to leave himself out when he comes to the landscape, and furnish us with so many delightful scenes apart from the personality of the much-reasoning, often polemical being who fills the remainder of the space. The reader will see by the autobiographical arrangement we have attempted to make how entirely *The Task* is Cowper. But Olney is not Cowper, nor the banks of Ouse, nor all those snowy, frosty brightnesses of his winter walks. The distinction thus made is very unusual and perfect in its way.

And if his landscapes are so worthy of attention, what shall we say of the domestic scenes which are so entirely his own? The fireside, that institution which we have all prided ourselves upon as so distinctively and exclusively English, may be said to be in its literary form Cowper's invention. He is the apostle of domestic life. He is the first poet to whom the household board, the kindly warmth of the household hearth, the social fellowship of the little family circle, has given inspiration. Calm affection, gentle talk, feminine occupations, the tranquillity which suits a sober age and chastened life, the reflective enjoyments of a mind detached from the world, all warmed and soothed by that comfort which is a British deity and household god, have found in him their exponent, their laureate, almost their founder, so far as the appreciation of mankind is concerned. It is not, it may be said, an exalted ideal of existence, but perhaps there is no image and realisation of life which has so much encouraged everyday happiness, and done so much for the space of those classes who are least considered in the world, as this gentle parlour, with its

drawn curtains and cheerful fire, which Cowper has made into one of the representative scenes of English life and there is no one that has more entered into the consciousness of mankind. The *salon*, brilliant with wit and beauty, with fine company and great names, where the art of conversation is carried to its highest triumphs, and everything glows and glitters, is a French and not an English ideal. The fireside is our insular shrine of happiness. Its atmosphere has coloured the mind, the very imagination of the country. The sense of what could be discussed there, of the subjects that were possible, the scenes that were in keeping with the tranquillity of the domestic tribunal, has had an effect which probably nothing else could have had in keeping our literature purer, our moral standard higher, and it has raised incalculably that lower level of happiness which seldom, perhaps, reaches any triumphant tide, but which makes life endurable to a countless multitude who have none of its prizes within their reach. It is to Cowper that we owe it if this domestic life, so often scorned by those who are the spokesmen of the race, unnecessary to those whose vitality is at its highest flood, has been received amid the modes of existence best known to the world, associated everywhere with the English name, and recognised not only as worthy of all respect, but as full of charm, refinement, and a delicate kind of pleasure. To say that recent generations have been less amenable to its gentle rule, that the ideal has somewhat palled upon us, and that, in our profound experience of those defects which are inseparable from every human advantage, we are less sure of the supreme superiority of the fireside than we were at the beginning of this century, is another matter. It would perhaps be wiser to say that the ideal has descended lower down, that perhaps it never was the ideal of the highest class of English society, and that now—when that highest class is indefinitely enlarged, and many of us, once well contented to be of the middle rank, as Cowper, and the Unwins, and all their society

felt themselves to be, claim the honours of a loftier social sphere—we leave our old love for the institution behind us. But this need not diminish the gratitude with which an innumerable multitude, still finding their best happiness in, and owing their tenderest recollections to, the scenes of English domesticity, should contemplate the poet whose parlour at Olney commemorated a new type of wellbeing, an enchanting picture of innocent living and mutual consolation, for the instruction of the world. The entire scene with which he begins *The Winter Evening* is obsolete in its circumstances. The postboy blowing his horn as he crosses the bridge—"the herald of a noisy world"—

"With spatter'd boots, strapp'd waist, and frozen locks,  
News from all nations lumbering at his back,

is as much out of date as the recluse behind his warm, drawn curtains, waiting for the one poor newspaper which is to show him through the loopholes of retreat a glimpse of the noisy world. We look forward with no such stir of pleasant excitement to our evening paper, which will repeat to us the news of the morning, with half a grain of apocryphal information added thereto, or to the postman going his round, who has already knocked at our door three or four times at least in the course of the day. It is all old fashioned and ended—a picture of the past. But it is a picture which has entered into national history and universal knowledge, and will never be dissociated from the English name—

'I crown thee King of intimate delights,  
Fireside enjoyments, homely happiness,  
And all the comforts that the lowly roof  
Of undisturbed Retirement, and the hours  
Of long, uninterrupted evening know

In these remarks we have confined ourselves entirely to *The Task*—the greatest work of Cowper's life, and his most individual and characteristic contribution to poetical

literature. We have ventured to describe it elsewhere as having had a large share in one of the new beginnings of literature, and opening a distinct chapter in English poetical history. His earlier works all belong to a previous age in poetry, concluding one era as *The Task* begins another. From these productions we have taken various passages, which are not unworthy of a place among the best of the period to which they belong. The "Portraits and Characters" do not indeed scathe and burn like those of Pope, or hand down a well-defined and recognisable person to everlasting infamy. Their judgments are milder, as their style is less brilliant. But Pope was the king of that manner and period, as Cowper was of his own and later age, and could no more have taken Cowper's walk in the snow than Cowper could have blasted Atticus. Yet our poet, we allow, was always full of prejudice. The enemies of his faith were all black to him, the offenders against his sense of what was holy and true without any redeeming quality. He was one of those who, believing little harm of those they know, make up for this sweet, instinctive charity by damning with a cordial faith those who, being unknown, may be as bad as anybody pleases. The contrast between Voltaire and the cottager, which everybody knows, is a fine instance of straightforward and unhesitating decision in this respect: whereas such a doubtful figure as that of the poet Churchill has all the excuses that tenderness can make for him.

Of Cowper's hymns we have quoted few, and these rather because the collection would have been incomplete without them than for any love of the verses themselves. They belong to the darkest period of his life. They express none of those simpler religious sentiments which are the best inspiration of the hymn writer—and illustrate the filial and tender side of piety. One of the same collection written by Newton, whose poetical gift was very far inferior—"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds"—is still a favourite in all churches. But Cow

per rarely touched this sweeter note His hymns are doctrinal—statements of faith rather than conceptions of praise It is true that we still find "God moves in a mysterious way" in most collections, and that even the "Fountain filled with blood" still finds a place amid the familiar utterances of piety but we cannot think the latter is often used by any congregation of worshipping people in these days Hymn writing is a faculty by itself It is curious that Cowper, whose heart was so profoundly moved by sacred subjects, should not have succeeded in this kind of composition He had the devotion, he had the poetry, but he does not seem to have had the knack of wedding them together Even out of his despondency and of the deep despair which fell over him so often like a cloud of darkness, there is no such cry of appeal or misery, as might give utterance to other breaking hearts The *Castaway* is the only one of his poems in which this profound and awful sentiment is embodied with force and fitness, and that is a composition of a totally different kind Some of the verses which at a later period his good-nature furnished to the parish clerk for the adornment of the bills of mortality are fine, but even among these there is not one that reaches the highest level The best is perhaps that which portrays the indifference to death and all cognate subjects of the ordinary intelligence—

" He that sits from day to day  
Where the prison'd lark is hung,  
Heedless of his loudest lay,  
Scarcely knows that he has sung

This is not profound or remarkable, but it returns to the ear, and is a graceful expression of a sufficiently easy sentiment. But there is nothing of Cowper's in this way that will rise naturally to the lips of simple worshippers, or be breathed by the voices of children round their mother's knee It is evident that he had not the secret of this manner of song

But curiously enough this religious dreamer—this despairing soul, overpowered by the sense of judgment to come, and finding no gleam of light anywhere, wherever he turned—had eminently the secret of another kind of writing, of a nature as foreign to the habitual strain of his thoughts as can be conceived. His humorous works are among the most complete of his successes. It is doubtful if a poem so entirely satisfactory and perfect for its purpose in every line as *John Gilpin* was ever written. It is long, but not a line too long, nor is there a false image or unnecessary word in it. The purely comic situation, the delightful heightening of every detail, the good humoured self recovery of the hero, with his “pleasant wit,” and the natural, simple fun of his repeated calamities, from which, notwithstanding, he emerges, to our delight, noway harmed, and with a possibility of again “riding abroad,” which leaves us full of glee—are all so easy, unforced, gay, and natural, that there is no drawback or abatement upon the pleasure. The story of its origin is well known. How Lady Austin told him the tale in one of his moods of darkness, with all the genial humour that made her society invaluable to him—how he could not sleep for laughter all night through, and in the morning presented her with her story turned in the way that has made it permanent. Afterwards he “hated himself for having written it” by times but even then was not deluded enough to be unconscious of its merit. It is said to have attracted no particular attention at first, being published in a newspaper of no great pretensions, but afterwards came to light and flew into unusual fame. The story of the titling time in the country, the farmers who were so coarse, and the parson who was so fine, is almost more humorous than *John Gilpin*. We have here a group instead of the single figure of the immortal horseman, and the fine incongruity, the ludicrous distress, the whimsical conjunction altogether, is touched with inimitable lightness and gaiety. It is strange to use such

words in reference to so melancholy a figure as that of the invalid recluse sinking deeper and deeper, year by year, into gloom and suffering but it is stranger still that it should be true, and that while he had little skill in expressing the deepest religious emotions of his soul in such verse as other adoring or suffering spirits could employ after him, he had the keenest perception of the fun, and the readiest faculty for embodying it. In nothing he attempts is he more happy. One would say he was here in his element, and that no mode of expression was so natural and easy to him.

In the following selection a number of short poems and extracts have been so placed together as to form a sort of autobiography of the poet. Beginning with his careless youth, and the first slight and faulty verses in which young William lightly tells the first awakening of youthful emotions within him, the reader will here be able to trace him through the vague and sad episode of his love story, and the sudden break of harsh madness and despair which rent his life asunder through the varied but calmer course of his middle age, interrupted by so many convulsions, yet including so many tranquil scenes and sober pleasures,—till it ends at last in a despair more still and hopeless, in his Mary's helpless decay, and the symbol of the castaway sailor living a lifetime in an hour "in ocean self-upheld." This arrangement has the effect, indeed, of separating several passages, especially from *The Task*, from their original setting, but in no case, we think, will the passages quoted be impaired by being placed in another sequence and made to interpret, which they do more truly than anything else can, the story of Cowper's life.



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## OF HIMSELF

WILLIAM was once a bashful youth ,  
His modesty was such,  
That one might say (to say the truth),  
He rather had too much

Some said that it was want of sense,  
And others, want of spirit  
(So blest a thing is impudence),  
While others could not bear it

But some a different notion had,  
And at each other winking,  
Observed that though he little said,  
He paid it off with thinking

Howe'er, it happened, by degrees  
He mended and grew perter ,  
In company was more at ease,  
And dressed a little smarter ,

Nay, now and then would look quite gay,  
As other people do ,  
And sometimes said, or tried to say,  
A witty thing or so

## AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL.

He eyed the women, and made free  
 To comment on their shapes ,  
 So that there was, or seemed to be  
 No fear of a relapse.

The women said, who thought him rough,  
 But now no longer foolish,  
 " The creature may do well enough,  
 But wants a deal of polish "

At length, improved from head to heel,  
 'Twere scarce too much to say,  
 No dancing bear was so genteel,  
 Or half so *dégage*'

Now that a miracle so strange  
 May not in vain be shown  
 Let the dear maid who wrought the change  
 E'en claim him for her own

## TO DELIA

WHY HE ASKED FOR A LOCK OF HER HAIR

DELIA, the unkindest girl on earth  
 When I besought the fair,  
 That favour of intrinsic worth,  
 A ringlet of her hair,

Refused that instant to comply  
 With my absurd request,  
 For reasons she could specify,  
 Some twenty score at least.

Trust me, my dear, however odd  
 It may appear to say,  
 I sought it merely to defraud  
 Thy spoiler of his prey

Yes ! when its sister locks shall fade,  
 As quickly fade they must,  
 When all their beauties are decayed,  
 Their gloss, their colour, lost—

Ah then ! if haply to my share  
 Some slender pittance fall,  
 If I but gain one single hair,  
 Nor age usurp them all,—

When you behold it still as sleek,  
 As lovely to the view,  
 As when it left thy snowy neck,—  
 That Eden where it grew,—

Then shall my Delia's self declare  
 That I professed the truth,  
 And have preserved my little share  
 In everlasting youth

## LOVERS QUARRELS

THIS evening, Dehra, you and I  
 Have managed most delightfully,  
     For with a frown we parted,  
 Having contrived some trifle that  
 We both may be much troubled at,  
     And sadly disconcerted

Yet well as each performed their part,  
 We might perceive it was but art,  
     And that we both intended  
 To sacrifice a little ease,  
 For all such petty flaws as these  
     Are made but to be mended

You knew, dissembler ! all the while,  
 How sweet it was to reconcile  
     After this heavy pelt,  
 That we should gain by this allay  
 When next we met, and laugh away  
     The care we never felt

Happy ! when we but seek to endure  
 A little pain, then find a cure  
     By double joy requited,  
 For friendship, like a severed bone,  
 Improves and gains a stronger tone  
     When aptly reunited

THINK, Delia, with what cruel haste  
Our fleeting pleasures move,  
Nor heedless thus in sorrow waste  
The moments due to love,

Be wise, my fair, and gently treat  
These few that are our friends,  
Think, thus abused, what sad regret  
Their speedy flight attends!

Sure in those eyes I love so well,  
And wished so long to see,  
Anger I thought could never dwell,  
Or anger aimed at me

No bold offence of mine I knew  
Should e'er provoke your hate,  
And, early taught to think you true,  
Still hoped a gentler fate

With kindness bless the present hour,  
Or oh! we meet in vain!  
What can we do in absence more  
Than suffer and complain?

Fated to ills beyond redress,  
We must endure our woe,  
The days allowed us to possess,  
'Tis madness to forego

## THE SYMPTOMS OF LOVE

WOULD my Delia know if I love, let her take  
My last thought at night, and the first when I wake,  
When my prayers and best wishes preferr'd for her sake

Let her guess what I muse on, when rambling alone  
I stride o'er the stubble each day with my gun,  
Never ready to shoot till the covey is flown.

Let her think what odd whimsies I have in my brain,  
When I read one page over and over again,  
And discover at last that I read it in vain

Let her say why so fix'd and so steady my look,  
Without ever regarding the person who spoke,  
Still affecting to laugh, without hearing the joke

Or why, when with pleasure her praises I hear  
(That sweetest of melody sure to my ear),  
I attend, and at once inattentive appear

And lastly, when summon'd to drink to my flame,  
Let her guess why I never once mention her name,  
Though herself and the woman I love are the same.

## SEPARATION

How oft, my Delia, since our last farewell  
 (Years that have rolled since that distressful hour),  
 Grieved I have said, when most our hopes prevail,  
 Our promised happiness is least secure.

Had you, my love, forbade me to pursue  
 My fond attempt, disdainfully retired,  
 And with proud scorn compelled me to subdue  
 The ill fated passion by yourself inspired,

Then haply to some distant spot removed,  
 Hopeless to grieve, unwilling to molest  
 With fond entreaties whom I dearly loved,  
 Despair or absence had redeemed my rest

But now, sole partner in my Delia's heart,  
 Yet doomed far off in exile to complain,  
 Eternal absence cannot ease my smart,  
 And Hope subsists but to prolong my pain

Oh then, kind Heaven, be this my latest breath !  
 Here end my life, or make it worth my care,  
 Absence from whom we love is worse than death,  
 And frustrate hope severer than despair

## ON THE DEATH OF SIR W. RUSSELL.

WRITTEN AFTER THE LAST MEETING BETWEEN COWLEY  
AND HIS COUSIN

DOOMED, as I am, in solitude to waste  
The present moments, and regret the past,  
Deprived of every joy I valued most,  
My friend torn from me, and my mistress lost,  
Can not this gloom I wear, this anxious mien  
The dull effect of humour, or of spleen ?  
Still, still I mourn, with each returning day,  
Him snatch'd by fate in early youth away,  
And her—through tedious years of doubt and pain,  
Fix'd in her choice, and faithful—but in vain !  
Oh prone to pity, generous, and sincere,  
Whose eye ne'er yet refused the wretch a tear,  
Whose heart the real claim of friendship knows,  
Nor thinks a lover's are but fancied woes,  
See me—ere yet my destined course half done,  
Cast forth a wanderer on a world unknown !  
See me neglected on the world's rude coast,  
Each dear companion of my voyage lost !  
Nor ask why clouds of sorrow shade my brow,  
And ready tears wait only leave to flow !  
Why all that soothes a heart from anguish free,  
And that delights the happy—palls with me !

FROM AN EPISTLE TO ROBERT  
LLOYD, ESQ

'Tis not that I design to rob  
Thee of thy birthright, gentle Bob,  
For thou art born sole heir and single  
Of dear Mat Prior's easy jingle,  
Nor that I mean, while thus I knit  
My threadbare sentiments together,  
To show my genius or my wit,  
When God and you know I have neither,  
Or such, as might be better shown  
By letting poetry alone  
'Tis not with either of these views  
That I presume to address the Muse  
But to divert a fierce banditti  
(Sworn foes to every thing that's witty),  
That, with a black infernal train,  
Make cruel inroads in my brain,  
And daily threaten to drive thence  
My little garrison of sense  
The fierce banditti which I mean,  
Are gloomy thoughts led on by Spleen  
Then there's another reason yet,  
Which is, that I may fairly quit  
The debt which justly became due  
The moment when I heard from you  
And you might grumble, crony mine,  
If paid in any other coin,  
Since twenty sheets of lead, God knows,  
(I would say twenty sheets of prose,)  
Can ne'er be deemed worth half so much  
As one of gold, and yours was such

# ON THE RECEIPT OF MY MOTHER'S PICTURE OUT OF NORFOLK,

THE GIFT OF MY COUSIN, ANN PODHAM

OH that those lips had language ! Life has passed  
With me but roughly since I heard thee last  
Those lips are thine—thy own sweet smile I see,  
The same that oft in childhood solaced me,  
Voice only fails, else how distinct they say,  
Grieve not, my child, chase all thy fears away !  
The meek intelligence of those dear eyes  
(Blessed be the art that can immortalise,  
The art that baffles Time's tyrannic clum  
To quench it) here shines on me still the same

Faithful remembrancer of one so dear,  
O welcome guest, though unexpected here !  
Who bidst me honour with an artless song,  
Affectionate, a mother lost so long,  
I will obey, not willingly alone,  
But gladly, as the precept were her own  
And, while that face renews my filial grief,  
Fancy shall weave a charm for my relief,  
Shall steep me in Elysian reverie,  
A momentary dream that thou art she

My mother ! when I learnt that thou wast dead,  
Say, wast thou conscious of the tears I shed ?  
Hovered thy spirit o'er thy sorrowing son,  
Wretch even then, life's journey just begun ?  
Perhaps thou gavest me, though unfelt, a kiss  
Perhaps a tear, if souls can weep in bliss—

Ah, that maternal smile ! It answers—Yes  
 I heard the bell tolled on thy burial day,  
 I saw the hearse that bore thee slow away,  
 And, turning from my nursery window, drew  
 A long, long sigh, and wept a last adieu !  
 But was it such ?—It was —Where thou art gone  
 Adieus and farewells are a sound unknown  
 May I but meet thee on that peaceful shore,  
 The parting word shall pass my lips no more !  
 Thy maidens, grieved themselves at my concern,  
 Oft gave me promise of thy quick return  
 What ardently I wished I long believed,  
 And, disappointed still, was still deceived  
 By expectation every day beguiled,  
 Dupe of *to morrow* even from a child  
 Thus many a sad to morrow came and went,  
 Till, all my stock of infant sorrow spent,  
 I learnt at last submission to my lot,  
 But, though I less deplored thee, ne'er forgot

Where once we dwelt our name is heard no more,  
 Children not thine have trod my nursery floor,  
 And where the gardener Robin, day by day,  
 Drew me to school along the public way,  
 Delighted with my bridle coach, and wrapped  
 In scarlet mantle warm, and velvet capped,  
 'Tis now become a history little known,  
 That once we called the pastoral house our own  
 Short-lived possession ! but the record fair  
 That memory keeps, of all thy kindness there,  
 Still outlives many a storm that has effaced  
 A thousand other themes less deeply traced  
 Thy nightly visits to my chamber made,  
 That thou mightst know me safe and warmly laid,  
 Thy morning bounties ere I left my home,  
 The biscuit, or confectionary plum,

The fragrant waters on my cheek bestowed  
 By thy own hand, till fresh they shone and glowed,  
 All this, and more endearing still than all,  
 Thy constant flow of love, that knew no fall,  
 Ne'er roughened by those cataracts and brakes  
 That humour interposed too often makes  
 All this still legible in memory's page,  
 And still to be so to my latest age,  
 Adds joy to duty, makes me glad to pay  
 Such honours to thee as my numbers may,  
 Perhaps a frail memorial, but sincere,  
 Not scorned in heaven, though little noticed here

Could Time, his flight reversed, restore the hours,  
 When playing with thy vesture's tissued flowers,  
 The violet, the pink, and jessamine,  
 I pricked them into paper with a pin  
 (And thou wast happier than myself the while,  
 Wouldst softly speak, and stroke my head and smile),  
 Could those few pleasant days again appear,  
 Might one wish bring them, would I wish them here?  
 I would not trust my heart,—the dear delight  
 Seems so to be desired, perhaps I might —  
 But no—what here we call our life is such,  
 So little to be loved, and thou so much,  
 That I should ill requite thee to constrain  
 Thy unbound spirit into bonds again.

Thou, as a gallant bark from Albion's coast  
 (The storms all weather'd and the ocean cross'd)  
 Shoots into port at some well haven'd isle,  
 Where spices breathe, and brighter seasons smile,  
 There sits quiescent on the floods, that show  
 Her beauteous form reflected clear below,  
 While airs impregnated with incense play  
 Around her, fanning light her streamers gray,  
 So thou, with sails how swift I hast reach'd the shore,

"Where tempests never beat nor billows roar,"  
 And thy loved consort on the dangerous tide  
 Of life long since has anchor'd by thy side.  
 But me, scarce hoping to attain that rest,  
 Always from port withheld, always distress'd,—  
 Me howling blasts drive devious, tempest toss'd,  
 Sails ripp'd, seams opening wide, and compass lost,  
 And day by day some current's thwarting force  
 Sets me more distant from a prosperous course.  
 Yet, oh, the thought that thou art safe, and he '  
 That thought is joy, arrive what may to me  
 My boast is not that I deduce my birth  
 From loins enthroned, and rulers of the earth,  
 But higher far my proud pretensions rise,—  
 The son of parents pass'd into the skies  
 And now, farewell '—Time unrevol'd has run  
 His wonted course, yet what I wish'd is done  
 By contemplation's help, not sought in vain,  
 I seem to have lived my childhood o'er again,  
 To have renew'd the joys that once were mine,  
 Without the sin of violating thine,  
 And, while the wings of fancy still are free,  
 And I can view this mimic show of thee,  
 Time has but half succeeded in his theft,  
 Thyself removed, thy power to soothe me left

LINES WRITTEN UNDER THE  
 INFLUENCE OF DELIRIUM

HATRED and vengeance,—my eternal portion  
Scarcely can endure delay of execution,—  
Wait with impatient readiness to seize my  
Soul in a moment

Damned below Judas, more abhorred than he was,  
 Who for a few pence sold his holy Master !  
 Twice betrayed Jesus me, the last delinquent,  
 Deems the profanest

Man disavows, and Deity disowns me,  
Hell might afford my miseries a shelter,  
Therefore, Hell keeps her ever hungry mouths all  
Bolted against me

Hard lot ! encompassed with a thousand dangers ;  
Weary, faint, trembling with a thousand terrors,  
I'm called, if vanquished ! to receive a sentence  
Worse than Abiram's.

Him the vindictive rod of angry Justice  
Sent quick and howling to the centre headlong,  
I, fed with judgment, in a fleshly tomb, am  
Buried above ground

## SOME ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF

I WAS a stricken deer that left the herd  
 Long since , with many an arrow deep infixed  
 My punting side was charged, when I withdrew  
 To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.  
 There was I found by One who had Himself  
 Been hurt by the archers    In His side He bore,  
 And in His hands and feet, the cruel scars  
 With gentle force soliciting the darts,  
 He drew them forth, and healed and bade me live  
 Since then, with few associates, in remote  
 And silent woods I wander, far from those  
 My former partners of the peopled scene ,  
 With few associates, and not wishing more  
 Here much I ruminate, as much I may,  
 With other views of men and manners now  
 Than once, and others of a life to come.  
 I see that all are wanderers, gone astray  
 Each in his own delusions , they are lost  
 In chase of fancied happiness, still wooed  
 And never won    Dream after dream ensues,  
 And still they dream that they shall still succeed,  
 And still are disappointed    Rings the world  
 With the vain stir    I sum up half mankind,  
 And add two thirds of the remaining half,  
 And find the total of their hopes and fears  
 Dreams, empty dreams    The million flit as gay  
 As if created only like the fly  
 That spreads his motley wings in the eye of noon,  
 To sport their season, and be seen no more

The rest are sober dreamers, grave and wise,  
And pregnant with discoveries new, and rare

'Twere well, says one sage erudite, profound,  
Terribly arch'd and aquiline his nose,  
And overbuilt with most impending brows—

" 'Twere well, could you part the world to live  
As the world pleases. What's the world to you?  
Much—I was born of woman, and drew milk,  
As sweet as charity, from human breasts  
I think, articulate, I laugh and weep,  
And exercise all functions of a man  
How then should I and any man that lives  
Be strangers to each other? Pierce my vein,  
Take of the crimson stream meandering there,  
And catechise it well—Apply thy pipe,  
Search it, and prove now if it be not blood  
Congenial with thine own—and if it be,  
What edge of subtlety canst thou suppose  
Keen enough, wise and skillful as thou art,  
To cut the link of brotherhood, by which  
One common Master bound me to the kind?  
True, I am no proficient, I confess,  
In arts like yours—I cannot call the swift  
And perilous lightnings from the angry clouds,  
And bid them hide themselves in earth beneath.

Such powers I boast not—neither can I rest  
A silent witness of the headlong rage  
Or heedless folly by which thousands die,  
Bone of my bone, and kindred souls to mine

*The Task, Book III*

## HIS OCCUPATIONS

How various his employments whom the world  
 Calls idle, and who justly in return  
 Esteems that busy world an idler too !  
 Friends, books, a garden, and perhaps his pen,  
 Delightful industry enjoyed at home,  
 And Nature in her cultivated trim  
 Dressed to his taste, inviting him abroad—  
 Can he want occupation who has these ?  
 Will he be idle who has much to enjoy ?  
 Me, therefore, studious of laborious ease,  
 Not slothful, happy to deceive the time  
 Not waste it, and aware that human life  
 Is but a loan to be repaid with use,  
 When He shall call His debtors to account,  
 From whom are all our blessings, business finds  
 Even here, while sedulous I seek to improve,  
 At least neglect not, or leave unemployed,  
 The mind He gave me, driving it, though slack  
 Too oft, and much impeded in its work  
 By causes not to be divulged in vain,  
 To its just point—the service of mankind  
 He that attends to his interior self,—  
 That has a heart and keeps it,—has a mind  
 That hungers and supplies it,—and who seeks  
 A social, not a dissipated life,—  
 Has business, feels himself engaged to achieve  
 No unimportant, though a silent task.

The morning finds the self sequestered man  
 Fresh for his task, intend what task he may

Whether inclement seasons recommend  
 His warm but simple home, where he enjoys,  
 With her who shares his pleasures and his heart,  
 Sweet converse, sipping calm the fragrant lymph  
 Which neatly she prepares, then to his book  
 Well chosen, and not sullenly perused  
 In selfish silence, but imparted oft  
 As aught occurs that she may smile to hear,  
 Or turn to nourishment digested well  
 Or if the garden with its many cares,  
 All well repaid, demand him, he attends  
 The welcome call, conscious how much the hand  
 Of lubbard Labour needs his watchful eye.

*The Task, Book III*

## LOVE OF NATURE

I HAVE loved the rural walk through lanes  
 Of grassy swarth, close cropped by nibbling sheep  
 And skirted thick with intertexture halm  
 Of thorny boughs, have loved the rural walk  
 O'er hills, through valleys, and by rivers bank,  
 E'er since a truant boy I passed my bounds  
 To enjoy a ramble on the banks of Thames  
 And still remember, nor without regret,  
 Of hours that sorrow since has much endeared  
 How oft, my slice of pocket store consumed,  
 Still hungering, penniless and far from home,  
 I fed on scarlet hips and stony haws,  
 Or blushing crabs, or berries that emboss  
 The bramble, black as jet, or sloes austere

Hard fare ! but such as boyish appetite  
 Disdains not, nor the palate undepraved  
 By culinary arts, unsavoury deems  
 No Sofa then awaited my return,  
 Nor Sofa then I needed Youth repairs  
 His wasted spirits quickly, by long toil  
 Incurring short fatigue , and though our years,  
 As life declines, speed rapidly away,  
 And not a year but pilfers as he goes  
 Some youthful grace that age would gladly keep,  
 A tooth or auburn lock, and by degrees  
 Their length and colour from the locks they spare,  
 The elastic spring of an unwearied foot  
 That mounts the stile with ease, or leaps the fence,  
 That play of lungs, inhaling and again  
 Respiring freely the fresh air, that makes  
 Swift pace or steep ascent no toil to me,  
 Mine have not pilfered yet , nor yet impaired  
 My relish of fair prospect scenes that soothed  
 Or charmed me young, no longer young, I find  
 Still soothing and of power to charm me still  
 And witness, dear companion of my walks,  
 Whose arm this twentieth winter I perceive  
 Fast locked in mine, with pleasure such as love  
 Confirmed by long experience of thy worth  
 And well tried virtues, could alone inspire,  
 Witness a joy that thou hast doubled long  
 Thou knowest my praise of nature most sincere,  
 And that my raptures are not conjured up  
 To serve occasions of poetic pomp,  
 But genuine, and art partner of them all

*The Task, Book I*

## REVERIE

JUST when our drawing-rooms begin to blaze  
With lights, by clear reflection multiplied  
From many a mirror, in which he of Gath,  
Goliath, might have seen his giant bulk  
Whole without stooping, towering crest and all,  
My pleasures too begin But me perhaps  
The glowing hearth may satisfy awhile  
With faint illumination, that uplifts  
The shadow to the ceiling, there by fits  
Dancing uncouthly to the quivering flame  
Not undelightful is an hour to me  
So spent in parlour twilight, such a gloom  
Suits well the thoughtful or unthinking mind,  
The mind contemplative, with some new theme  
Pregnant, or indisposed alike to all  
Laugh ye, who boast your more mercurial powers,  
That never feel a stupor, know no pause,  
Nor need one, I am conscious, and confess,  
Fearless, a soul that does not always think  
Me oft has fancy, ludicrous and wild,  
Soothed with a waking dream of houses, towers,  
Trees, churches, and strange visages expressed  
In the red cinders, while with poring eye  
I gazed, myself creating what I saw  
Nor less amused have I quiescent watched  
The sooty films that play upon the bars  
Pendulous, and foreboding, in the view  
Of superstition, prophesying still,  
Though still deceived, some stranger's near approach

'Tis thus the understanding takes repose  
 In indolent vacuity of thought,  
 And sleeps and is refreshed    Meanwhile the face  
 Conceals the mood lethargic with a mask  
 Of deep deliberation, as the man  
 Were tasked to his full strength, absorbed and lost  
 Thus oft, reclined at ease, I lose an hour  
 At evening, till at length the freezing blast,  
 That sweeps the bolted shutter, summons home  
 The recollected powers, and snapping short  
 The glassy threads with which the fancy weaves  
 Her brittle toils, restores me to myself  
 How calm is my recess, and how the frost,  
 Raging abroad, and the rough wind, endear  
 The silence and the warmth enjoyed within !

*The Task*, Book IV

## RURAL SCENES

BUT slighted as it is, and by the great  
 Abandoned, and, which still I more regret,  
 Infected with the manners and the modes  
 It knew not once, the country wins me still  
 I never framed a wish, or formed a plan,  
 That flattered me with hopes of earthly bliss,  
 But there I laid the scene    There early strayed  
 My fancy, ere yet liberty of choice  
 Had found me, or the hope of being free  
 My very dreams were rural, rural too  
 The firstborn efforts of my youthful muse,  
 Sportive, and jingling her poetic bells  
 Ere yet her ear was mistress of their powers

No bard could please me but whose lyre was tuned  
To Nature's praises   Heroes and their feats  
Fatigued me, never weary of the pipe  
Of Tityrus, assembling, as he sang,  
The rustic throng beneath his favourite beech  
Then MILTON had indeed a poet's charms  
New to my taste, his Paradise surpassed  
The struggling efforts of my boyish tongue  
To speak its excellence, I danced for joy  
I marvelled much that, at so ripe an age  
As twice seven years, his beauties had then first  
Engaged my wonder, and admiring still,  
And still admiring, with regret supposed  
The joy half lost because not sooner found  
Thee too, enamoured of the life I loved,  
Pathetic in its praise, in its pursuit  
Determined, and possessing it at last  
With transports such as favoured lovers feel,  
I studied, prized, and wished that I had known,  
Ingenious Cowley ! and though now reclaimed  
By modern lights from an erroneous taste,  
I cannot but lament thy splendid wit  
Entangled in the cobwebs of the schools,  
I still revere thee, courtly though retired,  
Though stretched at ease in Chertsey's silent bowers,  
Not unemployed, and finding rich amends  
For a lost world in solitude and verse.

*The Task, Book IV*

## WINTER EVENING

HARK ! 'tis the twanging horn ! O'er yonder bridge  
That with its wearisome but needful length  
Bestrides the wintry flood, in which the moon  
Sees her unwrinkled face reflected bright,  
He comes, the herald of a noisy world,  
With spattered boots, strapped waist, and frozen locks,  
News from all nations lumbering at his back.  
True to his charge, the close packed load behind,  
Yet careless what he brings, his one concern  
Is to conduct it to the destined inn,  
And having dropped the expected bag—pass on  
He whistles as he goes, light-hearted wretch,  
Cold and yet cheerful messenger of grief  
Perhaps to thousands, and of joy to some,  
To him indifferent whether grief or joy  
Houses in ashes, and the fall of stocks,  
Births, deaths, and marriages, epistles wet  
With tears that trickled down the writer's cheeks  
Fast as the periods from his fluent quill,  
Or charged with amorous sighs of absent swains,  
Or nymphs responsive, equally affect  
His horse and him, unconscious of them all  
But oh the important budget ! ushered in  
With such heart-shaking music, who can say  
What are its tidings ? have our troops awaked ?  
Or do they still, as if with opium drugged,  
Snore to the murmurs of the Atlantic wave ?  
Is India free ? and does she wear her plumed  
And jewelled turban with a smile of peace,

Or do we grind her still? The grand debate,  
 The popular harangue, the tart reply,  
 The logic, and the wisdom, and the wit,  
 And the loud laugh—I long to know them all,  
 I burn to set the imprisoned wranglers free,  
 And give them voice and utterance once again

Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,  
 Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,  
 And while the bubbling and loud hissing urn  
 Throws up a steamy column, and the cups  
 That cheer but not inebriate, wait on each,  
 So let us welcome peaceful evening in  
 Not such his evening, who with shining face  
 Sweats in the crowded theatre, and squeezed  
 And bored with elbow points through both his sides,  
 Outcolds the ranting actor on the stage,  
 Nor his, who patient stands till his feet throb,  
 And his head thumps, to feed upon the breath  
 Of patriots bursting with heroic rage,  
 Or placemen all tranquillity and smiles  
 This folio of four pages, happy work!  
 Which not even critics criticise, that holds  
 Inquisitive attention, while I read,  
 Fast bound in chains of silence, which the fair,  
 Though eloquent themselves, yet fear to break

*The Task, Book IV*

## READING

'Tis pleasant through the loopholes of retreat  
 To peep at such a world, to see the stir  
 Of the great Babel, and not feel the crowd,  
 To hear the roar she sends through all her gates,

At a safe distance, where the dying sound  
 Falls a soft murmur on the uninjured ear  
 Thus sitting, and surveying thus at ease  
 The globe and its concerns, I seem advanced  
 To some secure and more than mortal height,  
 That liberates and exempts me from them all  
 It turns submitted to my view, turns round  
 With all its generations, I behold  
 The tumult, and am still    The sound of war  
 Has lost its terrors ere it reaches me,  
 Grieves, but alarms me not    I mourn the pride  
 And avarice that make man a wolf to man,  
 Hear the faint echo of those brazen throats,  
 By which he speaks the language of his heart,  
 And sigh, but never tremble at the sound  
 He travels and expatiates, as the bee  
 From flower to flower, so he from land to land,  
 The manners, customs, policy of all  
 Pay contribution to the store he gleams,  
 He sucks intelligence in every clime,  
 And spreads the honey of his deep research  
 At his return, a rich repast for me.  
 He travels, and I too    I tread his deck,  
 Ascend his topmast, through his peering eyes  
 Discover countries, with a kindred heart  
 Suffer his woes, and share in his escapes,  
 While fancy, like the finger of a clock,  
 Runs the great circuit, and is still at home

O Winter ! ruler of the inverted year,  
 Thy scattered hair with sleet like ashes filled,  
 Thy breath congealed upon thy lips, thy cheeks  
 Fringed with a beard made white with other snows  
 Than those of age, thy forehead wrapt in clouds,  
 A leafless branch thy sceptre, and thy throne  
 A sliding car, indebted to no wheels,

But urged by storms along its slippery way ,  
I love thee, all unlovely as thou seemest,  
And dreaded as thou art    Thou holdest the sun  
A prisoner in the yet undawning east,  
Shortening his journey between morn and noon,  
And hurrying him, impatient of his stay,  
Down to the rosy west , but kindly still  
Compensating his loss with added hours  
Of social converse and instructive ease,  
And gathering, at short notice, in one group  
The family dispersed, and fixing thought,  
Not less dispersed by daylight and its cares.  
I crown thee King of intimate delights,  
Fireside enjoyments, homeborn happiness,  
And all the comforts that the lowly roof  
Of undisturbed retirement, and the hours  
Of long uninterrupted evening know  
No rattling wheels stop short before these gates ,  
No powdered pert, proficient in the art  
Of sounding an alarm, assaults these doors  
Till the street rings , no stationary steeds  
Cough their own knell, while, heedless of the sound,  
The silent circle fan themselves, and quake  
But here the needle plies its busy task,  
The pattern grows, the well depicted flower,  
Wrought patiently into the snowy lawn,  
Unfolds its bosom , buds, and leaves, and sprigs,  
And curling tendrils, gracefully disposed,  
Follow the nimble finger of the fair ,  
A wreath that cannot fade, of flowers that blow  
With most success when all besides decay  
The poet's or historian's page, by one  
Made vocal for the amusement of the rest ,  
The sprightly lyre, whose treasure of sweet sounds  
The touch from many a trembling cord shakes out

And the clear voice symphonious, yet distinct,  
 And in the charming strife triumphant still ,  
 Beguile the night, and set a keener edge  
 On female industry the threaded steel  
 Flies swiftly, and unfelt the task proceeds  
 The volume closed, the customary rites  
 Of the last meal commence. A Roman meal,  
 Such as the mistress of the world once found  
 Delicious, when her patriots of high note,  
 Perhaps by moonlight, at their humble doors,  
 And under an old oak's domestic shade,  
 Enjoyed, spare feast ! a radish and an egg  
 Discourse ensues, not trivial, yet not dull,  
 Nor such as with a frown forbids the play  
 Of fancy, or proscribes the sound of mirth ,  
 Nor do we madly, like an impious world,  
 Who deem religion frenzy, and the God  
 That made them an intruder on their joys,  
 Start at *His awful name*, or deem *His praise*  
 A jarring note. Themes of a graver tone,  
 Exciting oft our gratitude and love,  
 While we retrace with memory's pointing wand,  
 That calls the past to our exact review,  
 The dangers we have 'scaped, the broken snare,  
 The disappointed foe, deliverance found  
 Unlooked for, life preserved and peace restored,  
 Fruits of omnipotent eternal love.

“ Oh evenings worthy of the gods !” exclaimed  
 The Sabine bard    Oh evenings, I reply,  
 More to be prized and coveted than yours,  
 As more illumined, and with nobler truths,  
 That I and mine, and those we love, enjoy

*The Task, Book IV*

## HIS HARE

WELL,—one at least is safe    One shelter'd hare  
Has never heard the sanguinary yell  
Of cruel man, exulting in her woes  
Innocent partner of my peaceful home,  
Whom ten long years' experience of my care  
Has made at last familiar, she has lost  
Much of her vigilant instinctive dread,  
Not needful here, beneath a roof like mine  
Yes—thou mayst eat thy bread, and lick the hand  
That feeds thee, thou mayst frolic on the floor  
At evening, and at night retire secure  
To thy straw couch, and slumber unalarm'd,  
For I have gained thy confidence, have pledged  
All that is human in me to protect  
Thine unsuspecting gratitude and love  
If I survive thee I will dig thy grave,  
And when I place thee in it, sighing say,  
I knew at least one hare that had a friend  
*The Task, Book III*

## PEACE

So glide my life away ! and so at last,  
My share of duties decently fulfilled,  
May some disease, not tardy to perform  
Its destined office, yet with gentle stroke

Dismiss me weary to a safe retreat,  
 Beneath the turf that I have often trod  
 It shall not grieve me, then, that once, when called  
 To dress a Sofa with the flowers of verse,  
 I played awhile, obedient to the fair,  
 With that light task, but soon, to please her more,  
 Whom flowers alone I knew would little please,  
 Let fall the unfinished wreath, and roved for fruit,  
 Roved far, and gathered much some harsh, 'tis true,  
 Picked from the thorns and briars of reproof,  
 But wholesome, well digested, grateful some  
 To palates that can taste immortal truth,  
 Insipid else, and sure to be despised  
 But all is in His hand whose praise I seek.  
 In vain the poet sings, and the world hears,  
 If He regard not, though divine the theme.  
 'Tis not in artful measures, in the chime  
 And idle tinkling of a minstrel's lyre,  
 To charm His ear, whose eye is on the heart,  
 Whose frown can disappoint the proudest strain,  
 Whose approbation prosper—even mine

*The Task, Book VI*

## POETICAL EPISTLE TO LADY AUSTEN

THE ANNIVERSARY OF THEIR FIRST ACQUAINTANCE.

DEAR ANNA—between friend and friend,  
 Prose answers every common end,  
 Serves, in a plain and homely way,  
 To express the occurrence of the day,

Our health, the weather, and the news,  
What walks we take, what books we chuse,  
And all the floating thoughts we find  
Upon the surface of the mind.

But when a poet takes the pen,  
Far more alive than other men,  
He feels a gentle tingling come  
Down to his finger and his thumb  
Derived from nature's noblest part,  
The centre of a glowing heart  
And this is what the world, who knows  
No flights above the pitch of prose,  
His more sublime vagaries slighting,  
Denominates an itch for writing  
No wonder I, who scribble rhyme  
To catch the triflers of the time,  
And tell them truths divine and clear,  
Which, couched in prose, they will not hear,  
Who labour hard to allure and draw  
The loiterers I never saw,  
Should feel that itching and that tingling  
With all my purpose intermingling,  
To your intrinsic merit true,  
When called to address myself to you

Mysterious are His ways, whose power  
Brings forth that unexpected hour,  
When minds that never met before,  
Shall meet, unite, and part no more  
It is the allotment of the skies,  
The hand of the Supremely Wise,  
That guides and governs our affections,  
And plans and orders our connexions  
Directs us in our distant road,  
And marks the bounds of our abode.

Thus we were settled when you found us,  
 Peasants and children all around us,  
 Not dreaming of so dear a friend,  
 Deep in the abyss of Silver-End  
 Thus Martha, even against her will,  
 Perched on the top of yonder hill,  
 And you, though you must needs prefer  
 The fairer scenes of sweet Sancerre,  
 Are come from distant Loire, to choose  
 A cottage on the banks of Ouse  
 This page of Providence quite new,  
 And now just opening to our view,  
 Employs our present thoughts and pains  
 To guess and spell what it contains  
 But day by day, and year by year,  
 Will make the dark enigma clear,  
 And furnish us, perhaps, at last,  
 Like other scenes already past,  
 With proof, that we, and our affairs,  
 Are part of a Jehovah's cares,  
 For God unfolds by slow degrees  
 The purport of His deep decrees,  
 Sheds every hour a clearer light  
 In aid of our defective sight,  
 And spreads, at length, before the soul,  
 A beautiful and perfect whole,  
 Which busy man's inventive brain  
 Toils to anticipate, in vain

Say, Anna, had you never known  
 The beauties of a rose full blown,  
 Could you, though luminous your eye,  
 By looking on the bud descry,  
 Or guess, with a prophetic power,  
 The future splendour of the flower?

Just so, the Omnipotent, who turns  
The system of a world's concerns,  
From more minute can educe  
Events of most important use,  
And bid a dawning sky display  
The blaze of a meridian day  
But who can tell how vast the plan  
Which this day's incident began?  
Too small, perhaps, the slight occasion  
For our dim sighted observation,  
It pass'd unnoticed, as the bird  
That cleaves the yielding air unheard,  
And yet may prove when understood  
An harbinger of endless good  
Not that I deem, or mean to call  
Friendship a blessing cheap or small  
But merely to remark, that ours,  
Like some of Nature's sweetest flowers,  
Rose from a seed of tiny size,  
That seem'd to promise no such prize  
A transient visit intervening,  
And made almost without a meaning  
(Hardly the effect of inclination,  
Much less of pleasing expectation),  
Produced a friendship, then begun,  
That has cemented us in one,  
And placed it in our power to prove,  
By long fidelity and love,  
That Solomon has wisely spoken,—  
“A threefold cord is not soon broken

# THE VALEDICTION

(ADDRESSED TO LORD THURLOW AND GEORGE COLMAN,  
WHO TOOK NO NOTICE OF THE COPY OF HIS BOOK  
SENT TO THEM )

FAREWELL, false hearts ! whose best affections fail,  
Like shallow brooks which summer suns exhale !  
Forgetful of the man whom once ye chose,  
Cold in his cause, and careless of his woes,  
I bid you both a long and last adieu,  
Cold in my turn, and unconcerned like you

First, farewell Niger, whom, now duly proved,  
I disregard as much as once I loved  
Your brain well furnished, and your tongue well taught  
To press with energy your ardent thought,  
Your senatorial dignity of face,  
Sound sense, intrepid spirit, manly grace,  
Have raised you high as talents can ascend,  
Made you a peer, but spoilt you for a friend !  
Pretend to all that parts have e'er acquired ,  
Be great, be feared, be envied, be admired ,  
To fame as lasting as the earth pretend,  
But not, hereafter, to the name of friend !  
I sent you verse, and, as your lordship knows,  
Backed with a modest sheet of humble prose ,  
Not to recall a promise to your mind,  
Fulfilled with ease had you been so inclined,  
But to comply with feelings, and to give  
Proof of an old affection still alive

Your sullen silence serves at least to tell  
Your altered heart, and so, my lord, farewell !

Next, busy actor on a meaner stage,  
Amusement monger of a trifling age  
Illustrious histrionic patentee,  
Terent'ius, once my friend, farewell to thee !  
In thee some virtuous qualities combine  
To fit thee for a nobler part than thine  
Who, born a gentleman, hast' scooped too low,  
To live by buskin, sock, and rance show  
Thy schoolfellow, and partner of thy play,  
Where Nichol swung the lurch and twined the bays,  
And having known thee bearded, and full grown,  
The weekly censor of a laughing town,  
I thought the volume I presumed to send,  
Graced with the name of a long absent friend,  
Might prove a welcome gift, and touch thine heart  
No hard by nature, in a feeling part.  
But thou, it seems (what cannot grandeur do,  
Though but a dream !), art grown disdainful too  
And strutting in thy school of queens and kings  
Who fret their hour and are forgot ten things,  
Hast' caught the cold distemper of the day,  
And, like his lordship, cast thy friend a way  
Oh, Friendship ! cordial of the human breast !  
So little felt, so fervently professed !  
Thy blossoms deck our unsuspicious years  
The promise of delicious fruit appears  
We hug the hopes of constancy and truth,  
Such is the folly of our dreaming youth,  
But soon, alas ! detect the rash mistake  
That sanguine inexperience loves to make,  
And view with tears the expected harvest lost,  
Decayed by time, or withered by a frost

Whoever undertakes a friend's great part  
Should be renewed in nature, pure in heart,  
Prepared for martyrdom, and strong to prove  
A thousand ways the force of genuine love.  
He may be called to give up health and gain,  
To exchange content for trouble, ease for pain,  
To echo sigh for sigh, and groan for groan,  
And wet his cheeks with sorrows not his own  
The heart of man, for such a task too frail,  
When most relied on is most sure to fail,  
And, summoned to partake its fellow's woe,  
Starts from its office like a broken bow

Votaries of business and of pleasure prove  
Faithless alike in friendship and in love  
Retired from all the circles of the gay,  
And all the crowds that bustle life away,  
To scenes where competition, envy, strife,  
Beget no thunder clouds to trouble life,  
Let me, the charge of some good angel, find  
One who has known and has escaped mankind,  
Polite, yet virtuous, who has brought away  
The manners, not the morals, of the day  
With him, perhaps with *her* (for men have known  
No firmer friendships than the fair have shown),  
Let me enjoy, in some unthought of spot,  
All former friends forgiven and forgot,  
Down to the close of life's fast fading scene,  
Union of hearts, without a flaw between  
'Tis grace, 'tis bounty, and it calls for praise,  
If God give health, that sunshine of our days '  
And if He add, a blessing shared by few,  
Content of heart, more praises still are due  
But if He grant a friend, that boon possessed  
Indeed is treasure, and crowns all the rest ,

And giving one, whose heart is in the skies,  
 Born from above, and made divinely wise,  
 He gives, what bankrupt Nature never can,  
 Whose noblest com is light and brittle man,  
 Gold, purer far than Ophir ever knew,  
 A soul, an image of Himself, and therefore true.

*November 1783*

## TO THE REV MR NEWTON,

ON HIS RETURN FROM RAMSGATE.

THAT ocean you of late surveyed,  
 Those rocks, I too have seen,  
 But I afflicted and dismayed,  
 You tranquil and serene.

You from the flood controlling steep  
 Saw stretched before your view,  
 With conscious joy, the threatening deep,  
 No longer such to you

To me the waves that ceaseless broke  
 Upon the dangerous coast,  
 Hoarsely and ominously spoke  
 Of all my treasure lost.

Your sea of troubles you have past,  
 And found the peaceful shore,  
 I, tempest tossed, and wrecked at last,  
 Come home to port no more.

*October 1780.*

# TO THE NIGHTINGALE

WHICH THE AUTHOR HEARD SING ON NEW YEAR'S  
DAY, 1792

WHENCE is it, that amazed I hear  
From yonder withered spray,  
This foremost morn of all the year,  
The melody of May?

And why, since thousands would be proud  
Of such a favour shown,  
Am I selected from the crowd,  
To witness it alone?

Sing'st thou, sweet Philomel, to me,  
For that I also long  
Have practised in the groves like thee,  
Though not like thee, in song?

Or sing'st thou rather, under force  
Of some divine command,  
Commissioned to presage a course  
Of happier days at hand?

Thrice welcome then I for many a long  
And joyless year have I,  
As thou to day, put forth my song  
Beneath a wintry sky

But thee no wintry skies can harm,  
Who only need'st to sing,  
To make even January charm,  
And every season Spring

## TO MRS UNWIN

MARY ! I want a lyre with other strings,  
Such aid from heaven as some have feign'd they drew,  
An eloquence scarce given to mortals, new  
And undebased by praise of meaner things,  
That, ere through age or woe I shed my wings,  
I may record thy worth with honour due,  
In verse as musical as thou art true,  
And that immortalises whom it sings  
But thou hast little need    There is a book  
By seraphs writ with beams of heavenly light,  
On which the eyes of God not rarely look,  
A chronicle of actions just and bright,  
There all thy deeds, my faithful Mary, shine,  
And, since thou own'st that praise, I spare thee mine

*May 1793.*

## THE SHRUBBERY

WRITTEN IN A TIME OF AFFLICTION

OH happy shades ! to me unblest,  
Friendly to peace, but not to me,  
How ill the scene that offers rest,  
And heart that cannot rest, agree !

This glassy stream, that spreading pine,  
 Those alders quivering to the breeze,  
 Might soothe a soul less hurt than mine,  
 And please, if anything could please

But fix'd, unalterable Care,  
 Foregoes not what she feels within,  
 Shows the same sadness everywhere,  
 And slights the season and the scene.

For all that pleased in wood or lawn,  
 While Peace possess'd these silent bowers,  
 Her animating smile withdrawn,  
 Has lost its beauties and its powers

The saint or moralist should tread  
 This moss grown alley, musing slow ,  
 They seek like me the secret shade,  
 But not like me, to nourish woe

Mc fruitful scenes and prospects waste,  
 Alike admonish not to roam ,  
 These tell me of enjoyments past,  
 And those of sorrows yet to come

## TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ

HAYLEY, thy tenderness fraternal, shown,  
 In our first interview, delightful guest !  
 To Mary, and me for her dear sake distressed,  
 Such as it is has made my heart thy own,

Though heedless now of new engagements grown  
 For threescore winters make a wintry breast,  
 And I had purposed ne'er to go in quest  
 Of Friendship more, except with God alone.  
 But thou hast won me nor is God my foe,  
 Who, ere this last afflictive scene began,  
 Sent thee to mitigate the dreadful blow,  
 My brother, by whose sympathy I know  
 Thy true deserts infallibly to scan,  
 Not more to admire the Bard than love the Man.

*June 2 1792*

## TO MARY

THE twentieth year is well nigh past,  
 Since first our sky was overcast,  
 Ah, would that this might be the last !  
My Mary !

Thy spirits have a fainter flow,  
 I see thee daily weaker grow,  
 'Twas my distress that brought thee low,  
My Mary !

Thy needles, once a shining store,  
 For my sake restless heretofore,  
 Now rust disused, and shine no more,  
My Mary !

For though thou gladly wouldst fulfil  
The same kind office for me still,  
Thy sight now seconds not thy will,  
My Mary !

But well thou playedst the housewife's part,  
And all thy threads with magic art  
Have wound themselves about this heart,  
My Mary !

Thy indistinct expressions seem  
Like language uttered in a dream ,  
Yet me they charm, whate'er the theme,  
My Mary !

Thy silver locks, once auburn bright,  
Are still more lovely in my sight  
Than golden beams of orient light,  
My Mary !

For, could I view nor them nor thee,  
What sight worth seeing could I see ?  
The sun would rise in vain for me,  
My Mary !

Partakers of thy sad decline,  
Thy hands their little force resign ,  
Yet, gently prest, press gently mine,  
My Mary !

Such feebleness of limbs thou provest,  
That now at every step thou movest,  
Upheld by two , yet still thou lovest,  
My Mary !

And still to love, though press'd with ill,  
In wintry age to feel no chill,  
With me is to be lovely still,

My Mary !

But ah ! by constant heed I know,  
How oft the sadness that I show  
Transforms thy smiles to looks of woe,

My Mary !

And should my future lot be cast,  
With much resemblance of the past,  
Thy worn out heart will break at last,

My Mary !

## THE CASTAWAY

OBSCUREST night involved the sky,  
The Atlantic billows roared,  
When such a destined wretch as I,  
Washed headlong from on board,  
Of friends, of hope, of all bereft,  
His floating home for ever left

No braver chief could Albion boast  
Than he with whom he went,  
Nor ever ship left Albion's coast  
With warmer wishes sent.  
He loved them both, but Both in vain,  
Nor him beheld, nor her again.

Not long beneath the whelming brine,  
 Expert to swim, he lay ,  
 Nor soon he felt his strength decline,  
 Or courage die away ,  
 But waged with death a lasting strife,  
 Supported by despair of life

He shouted nor his friends had failed  
 To check the vessel's course,  
 But so the furious blast prevailed,  
 That, pitiless perforce,  
 They left their outcast mate behind,  
 And scudded still before the wind

Some succour yet they could afford ,  
 And such as storms allow,  
 The cask, the coop, the floated cord,  
 Delayed not to bestow  
 But he (they knew) nor ship nor shore  
 Whate'er they gave, should visit more.

Nor, cruel as it seemed, could he  
 Their haste himself condemn,  
 Aware that flight, in such a sea,  
 Alone could rescue them ,  
 Yet bitter felt it still to die  
 Deserted, and his friends so nigh

He long survives, who lives an hour  
 In ocean, self upheld ,  
 And so long he, with unspent power,  
 His destiny repelled ,  
 And ever, as the minutes flew,  
 Entreated help, or cried " Adieu !"

At length, his transient respite past,  
His comrades, who before  
Had heard his voice in every blast,  
Could catch the sound no more  
For then, by toil subdued, he drank  
The stifling wave, and then he sank

No poet wept him, but the page  
Of narrative sincere,  
That tells his name, his worth, his age,  
Is wet with Anson's tear  
And tears by bards or heroes shed  
Alike immortalise the dead.

I therefore purpose not, or dream,  
Descanting on his fate,  
To give the melancholy theme  
A more enduring date  
But misery still delights to trace  
Its semblance in another's case.

No voice divine the storm allayed,  
No light propitious shone,  
When, snatched from all effectual aid,  
We perished, each alone  
But I beneath a rougher sea,  
And whelmed in deeper gulfs than he

*March 20 1797*

DESCRIPTIVE



## A LANDSCAPE

How oft upon yon eminence our pace  
Has slacken'd to a pause, and we have borne  
The ruffling wind, scarce conscious that it blew,  
While admiration feeding at the eye,  
And still unsated, dwelt upon the scene  
Thence with what pleasure have we just discern'd  
The distant plough slow moving, and beside  
His labouring team, that swerved not from the track,  
The sturdy swain diminish'd to a boy  
Here Ouse, slow winding through a level plain  
Of spacious meads with cattle sprinkled o'er,  
Conducts the eye along his sinuous course  
Delighted    There, fast rooted in their bank  
Stand, never overlook'd, our favourite elms,  
That screen the herdsman's solitary hut ,  
While far beyond, and overthwart the stream,  
That, as with molten glass, inlays the vale,  
The sloping land recedes into the clouds ,  
Displaying on its varied side the grace  
Of hedge row beauties numberless, square tower,  
Tall spire, from which the sound of cheerful bells  
Just undulates upon the listening ear ,  
Groves, heaths, and smoking villages remote  
Scenes must be beautiful which daily view'd,  
Please daily, and whose novelty survives

Long knowledge and the scrutiny of years  
Praise justly due to those that I describe

Nor rural sights alone, but rural sounds  
Exhilarate the spirit, and restore  
The tone of languid nature    Mighty winds,  
That sweep the skirt of some far spreading wood  
Of ancient growth, make music not unlike  
The dash of Ocean on his winding shore,  
And lull the spirit while they fill the mind,  
Unnumbered branches waving in the blast,  
And all their leaves fast fluttering, all at once.  
Nor less composure waits upon the roar  
Of distant floods, or on the softer voice  
Of neighbouring fountain, or of rills that slip  
Through the cleft rock, and chiming as they fall  
Upon loose pebbles, lose themselves at length  
In matted grass, that with a livelier green  
Betrays the secret of their silent course  
Nature inanimate employs sweet sounds,  
But animated nature sweetly still,  
To soothe and satisfy the human ear  
Ten thousand warblers cheer the day, and one  
The livelong night    nor these alone, whose notes  
Nice fingered art must emulate in vain,  
But cawing rooks, and kites that swim sublime  
In still repeated circles, screaming loud,  
The jay, the pie, and even the boding owl  
That hails the rising moon, have charms for me  
Sounds inharmonious in themselves and harsh,  
Yet heard in scenes where peace for ever reigns,  
And only there, please highly for their sake

Peace to the artist, whose ingenious thought  
Devised the weather house, that useful toy !  
Fearless of humid air and gathering rains  
Forth steps the man,—an emblem of myself,—

More delicate, his timorous mate retires  
When Winter soaks the fields, and female feet,  
Too weak to struggle with tenacious clay,  
Or ford the rivulets, are best at home,  
The task of new discoveries falls on me  
At such a season, and with such a charge,  
Once went I forth, and found, till then unknown,  
A cottage, whither oft we since repair  
'Tis perched upon the green hill top, but close  
Environed with a ring of branching elms  
That overhang the thatch, itself unseen,  
Peeps at the vale below, so thick beset  
With foliage of such dark redundant growth,  
I called the low roofed lodge the *Peasant's Nest*  
And hidden as it is, and far remote  
From such unpleasing sounds as haunt the ear  
In village or in town, the bay of curs  
Incessant, clinking hammers, grinding wheels  
And infants clamorous whether pleased or pained,  
Oft have I wished the peaceful covert mine.  
Here, I have said, at least I should possess  
The poet's treasure, silence, and indulge  
The dreams of fancy, tranquil and secure  
Vain thought ! the dweller in that still retreat  
Dearly obtains the refuge it affords  
Its elevated site forbids the wretch  
To drink sweet waters of the crystal well,  
He dips his bowl into the weedy ditch,  
And, heavy laden, brings his beverage home,  
Far fetch'd and little worth, nor seldom waits,  
Dependent on the baker's punctual call,  
To hear his creaking panniers at the door,  
Angry and sad, and his last crust consumed  
So farewell envy of the *Peasant's Nest*  
If solitude make scant the means of life,

Society for me '—Thou seeming sweet,  
 Be still a pleasing object in my view,  
 My visit still, but never mine abode

*The Task, Book I*

## SPRING

DESCENDING now (but cautious lest too fast)  
 A sudden steep, upon a rustic bridge,  
 We pass a gulf, in which the willows dip  
 Their pendent boughs, stooping as if to drink  
 Hence, ankle deep in moss and flowery thyme,  
 We mount again, and feel at every step  
 Our foot half sunk in hillock's green and soft,  
 Raised by the mole, the miner of the soil  
 He, not unlike the great ones of mankind,  
 Disfigures earth, and plotting in the dark,  
 Toils much to earn a monumental pile,  
 That may record the mischiefs he has done

The summit gain'd, behold the proud alcove  
 That crowns it ' yet not all its pride secures  
 The grand retreat from injuries impress'd  
 By rural carvers who with knives deface  
 The pinnels, leaving an obscure rude name  
 In characters uncouth and spelt amiss,  
 So strong the zeal t' immortalise himself  
 Beats in the breast of man that e'en a few,  
 Few transient years, won from the abyss abhorred  
 Of blank oblivion, seem a glorious prize,  
 And even to a clown Now roves the eye,  
 And posted on this speculative height  
 Exults in its command The sheepfold here

Pours out its fleecy tenants o'er the glebe.  
At first, progressive as a stream, they seek  
The middle field , but scattered by degrees,  
Each to his choice, soon whiten all the land  
There from the sunburnt hayfield, homeward creeps  
The loaded wain, while, lightened of its charge,  
The wain that meets it passes swiftly by,  
The boorish driver leaning o'er his team  
Vociferous, and impatient of delay  
Nor less attractive is the woodland scene,  
Diversified with trees of every growth,  
Alike yet various    Here the gray smooth trunks  
Of ash, or lime, or beech, distinctly shine,  
Within the twilight of their distant shades ,  
There lost behind a rising ground, the wood  
Seems sunk, and shortened to its topmost boughs.  
No tree in all the grove but has its charms,  
Though each its hue peculiar    paler some,  
And of a wannish gray , the willow such,  
And poplar that with silver lines his leaf,  
And ash far stretching his umbrageous arm ,  
Of deeper green the elm , and deeper still,  
Lord of the woods, the long surviving oak  
Some glossy leaved, and shining in the sun,  
The maple, and the beech of oily nuts  
Prolific, and the lime at dewy eve  
Diffusing odours    nor unnoted pass  
The sycamore, capricious in attire  
Now green, now tawny, and ere autumn yet  
Have changed the woods, in scarlet honours bright  
O'er these, but far beyond (a spacious map  
Of hill and valley interposed between),  
The Ouse, dividing the well watered land,  
Now glitters in the sun, and now retires,  
As bashful, yet impatient to be seen

Hence the declivity is sharp and short,  
 And such the re ascent , between them weeps  
 A little naiad her impoverished urn  
 All summer long, which winter fills again

*The Task, Book I*

HERE unmolested, through whatever sign  
 The sun proceeds, I wander , neither mist,  
 Nor freezing sky nor sultry, checking me,  
 Nor stranger intermeddling with my joy  
 Even in the spring and playtime of the year,  
 That calls the unwonted villager abroad  
 With all her little ones, a sportive train,  
 To gather kingcups in the yellow mead,  
 And prink their hair with daisies, or to pick  
 A cheap but wholesome salad from the brook,  
 These shades are all my own    The timorous hare,  
 Grown so familiar with her frequent guest,  
 Scarce shuns me , and the stockdove unalarmed  
 Sits cooing in the pine tree, nor suspends  
 His long love ditty for my near approach  
 Drawn from his refuge in some lonely elm  
 That age or injury has hollowed deep,  
 Where on his bed of wool and matted leaves  
 He has outslept the winter, ventures forth  
 To frisk awhile, and bask in the warm sun,  
 The squirrel, flippant, pert, and full of play  
 He sees me, and at once, swift as a bird,  
 Ascends the neighbouring beech , there whisks his  
     brush,  
 And perks his ears, and stamps and scolds aloud,  
 With all the prettiness of feigned alarm,  
 And anger insignificantly fierce.

The heart is hard in nature, and unfit  
 For human fellowship, as being void

Of sympathy, and therefore dead alike  
To love and friendship both, that is not pleased  
With sight of animals enjoying life,  
Nor feels their happiness augment his own  
The bounding fawn that darts across the glade  
When none pursues, through mere delight of heart,  
And spirits buoyant with excess of glee,  
The horse, as wanton and almost as fleet,  
That skims the spacious meadow at full speed,  
Then stops and snorts, and throwing high his heels  
Starts to the voluntary race again,  
The very kine that gambol at high noon,  
The total herd receiving first from one  
That leads the dance a summons to be gay,  
Though wild their strange vagaries, and uncouth  
Their efforts, yet resolved with one consent  
To give such act and utterance as they may  
To ecstasy too big to be suppressed,—  
These, and a thousand images of bliss,  
With which kind Nature graces every scene  
Where cruel man defeats not her design,  
Impart to the benevolent, who wish  
All that are capable of pleasure pleased,  
A far superior happiness to theirs,  
The comfort of a reasonable joy

*The Task, Book VI*

## THE EFFECT OF NATURAL BEAUTY

LOVELY indeed the mimic works of Art,  
But Nature's works far lovelier I admire,  
None more admits, the painter's magic skill,  
Who shows me that which I shall never see,

Conveys a distant country into mine,  
And throws Italian light on English walls  
But imitative strokes can do no more  
Than please the eye—sweet Nature every sense  
The air salubrious of her lofty hills,  
The cheering fragrance of her dewy vales.  
And music of her woods—no works of man  
May rival these, these all bespeak a power  
Peculiar, and exclusively her own  
Beneath the open sky she spreads the feast,  
'Tis free to all—'tis every day renewed,  
Who scorns it, starves deservedly at home  
He does not scorn it, who, imprisoned long  
In some unwholesome dungeon, and a prey  
To sallow sickness, which the vapours dank  
And clammy of his dark abode have bred,  
Escapes at last to liberty and light—  
His cheek recovers soon its healthful hue,  
His eye relumines its extinguished fires,  
He walks, he leaps, he runs—is winged with joy,  
And riots in the sweets of every breeze  
He does not scorn it, who has long endured  
A fever's agonies, and fed on drugs.  
Nor yet the mariner, his blood inflamed  
With acrid salts, his very heart athirst  
To gaze at Nature in her green array,  
Upon the ship's tall side he stands, possessed  
With visions prompted by intense desire  
Fair fields appear below, such as he left  
Far distant, such as he would die to find,—  
He seeks them headlong, and is seen no more

*The Task*, Book I

## EVENING

COME, Evening, once again, season of peace,  
Return, sweet Evening, and continue long '  
Methinks I see thee in the streaky west,  
With matron step slow moving, while the night  
Treads on thy sweeping train, one hand employ'd  
In letting fall the curtain of repose  
On bird and beast, the other charged for man  
With sweet oblivion of the cares of day,  
Not sumptuously adorn'd, nor needing aid,  
Like homely featured night, of clustering gems,  
A star or two just twinkling on thy brow  
Suffices thee, save that the moon is thine  
No less than hers, not worn indeed on high  
With ostentatious pageantry, but set  
With modest grandeur in thy purple zone,  
Resplendent less, but of an ampler round  
Come then, and thou shalt find thy votary calm,  
Or make me so    Composure is thy gift  
And whether I devote thy gentle hours  
To books, to music, or the poet's toil,  
To weaving nets for bird alluring fruit,  
Or twining silken threads round ivory reels,  
When they command whom man was born to please,  
I slight thee not, but make thee welcome still

*The Task, Book IV*

## WINTER THE FIRST SNOW

I SAW the woods and fields at close of day  
A variegated show , the meadows green,  
Though faded , and the lands, where lately waved  
The golden harvest, of a mellow brown,  
Upturn'd so lately by the forceful share ,  
I saw far off the weedy fallows smile  
With verdure not unprofitable, grazed  
By flocks, fast feeding, and selecting each  
His favourite herb , while all the leafless groves,  
That skirt the horizon, wore a sable hue,  
Scarce noticed in the kindred dusk of eve  
To morrow brings a change, a total change !  
Which even now, though silently perform'd  
And slowly, and by most unfelt, the face  
Of universal nature undergoes  
Fast falls a fleecy shower the downy flakes  
Descending, and, with never ceasing lapse,  
Softly alighting upon all below,  
Assimilate all objects. Earth receives  
Gladly the thickening mantle, and the green  
And tender blade that fear'd the chilling blast,  
Escapes unhurt beneath so warm a veil

In such a world, so thorny, and where none  
Finds happiness unblighted, or, if found,  
Without some thurstly sorrow at his side,  
It seems the part of wisdom, and no sin  
Against the law of love, to measure lots  
With less distinguish'd than ourselves, that thus  
We may with patience bear our moderate ills,  
And sympathise with others, suffering more

Ill fares the traveller now, and he that stalks  
In ponderous boots beside his reeking team  
The wain goes heavily, impeded sore  
By congregated loads adhering close  
To the clogg'd wheels, and in its sluggish pace  
Noiseless appears a moving hill of snow  
The toiling steeds expand the nostril wide,  
While every breath, by respiration strong  
Forced downward, is consolidated soon  
Upon their jutting chests He, form'd to bear  
The pelting brunt of the tempestuous night,  
With half shut eyes and pucker'd cheeks, and teeth  
Presented bare against the storm, plods on  
One hand secures his hat, save when with both  
He brandishes his pliant length of whip,  
Resounding oft, and never heard in vain

*The Task, Book IV*

## THE POOR IN WINTER

POOR, yet industrious, modest, quiet, next,  
Such claim compassion in a night like this,  
And have a friend in every feeling heart  
Warm'd while it lasts, by labour, all day long  
They brave the season, and yet find at eve,  
Ill clad and fed but sparely, time to cool  
The frugal housewife trembles when she lights  
Her scanty stock of brushwood, blazing clear,  
But dying soon, like all terrestrial joys  
The few small embers left she nurses well,  
And while her infant race, with outspread hands,  
And crowded knees, sit cowering o'er the sparks,

Retires, content to quake, so they be warm'd  
The man feels least, as more inured than she  
To winter, and the current in his veins  
More briskly moved by his severer toil,  
Yet he too finds his own distress in theirs  
The taper soon extinguish'd, which I saw  
Dangled along at the cold finger's end  
Just when the day declined, and the brown loaf  
Lodged on the shelf, half eaten, without sauce  
Of savoury cheese, or butter costlier still,  
Sleep seems their only refuge for, alas!  
Where penury is felt the thought is chain'd,  
And sweet colloquial pleasures are but few  
With all this thrift they thrive not. All the care  
Ingenuous parsimony takes, but just  
Saves the small inventory, bed and stool,  
Skillet and old carved chest, from public sale  
They live, and live without extorted alms  
From grudging hands, but other boast have none  
To soothe their honest pride, that scorns to beg,  
Nor comfort else, but in their mutual love  
I praise you much, ye meek and patient pair,  
For ye are worthy, choosing rather far  
A dry but independent crust, hard earn'd,  
And eaten with a sigh, than to endure  
The rugged frowns and insolent rebuffs  
Of knives in office, partial in the work  
Of distribution, liberal of their aid  
To clamorous importunity in rags,  
But oftimes deaf to suppliants, who would blush  
To wear a tatter'd garb however coarse,  
Whom famine cannot reconcile to filth,  
These ask with painful shyness, and refused  
Because deserving, silently retire.

## THE WINTER MORNING

'Tis morning ; and the sun with ruddy orb  
Ascending fires the horizon while the clouds  
That crowd away before the driving wind,  
More ardent as the disk emerges more,  
Resemble most some city in a blaze,  
Seen through the leafless wood His slanting ray  
Slides ineffectual down the snowy vale,  
And tinging all with his own rosy hue,  
From every herb and every spiry blade  
Stretches a length of shadow o'er the field  
Mine, spindling into longitude immense,  
In spite of gravity, and sage remark  
That I myself am but a fleeting shade,  
Provokes me to a smile With eye askance  
I view the muscular proportioned limb  
Transformed to a lean shank The shapeless pair,  
As they designed to mock me, at my side  
Take step for step , and as I near approach  
The cottage, walk along the plastered wall,  
Preposterous sight ! the legs without the man  
The verdure of the plain lies buried deep  
Beneath the dazzling deluge , and the bents  
And coarser grass, upspearing o'er the rest,  
Of late unsightly and unseen, now shine  
Conspicuous, and in bright apparel clad,  
And fledged with icy feathers, nod superb  
The cattle mourn in corners where the fence  
Screens them, and seem half petrified to sleep  
In unrecumbent sadness There they wait

Their wonted fodder, not like hungering man,  
Fretful if unsupplied, but silent, meek,  
And patient of the slow paced swain's delay  
He from the stack carves out the accustomed load,  
Deep plunging, and again deep plunging oft,  
His broad keen knife into the solid mass,  
Smooth as a wall the upright remnant stands,  
With such undeviating and even force  
He severs it away no needless care  
Lest storms should overset the leaning pile  
Deciduous, or its own unbalanced weight  
Forth goes the woodman, leaving unconcerned  
The cheerful haunts of man, to wield the axe  
And drive the wedge in yonder forest drear,  
From morn to eve his solitary task  
Shaggy, and lean, and shrewd, with pointed ears  
And tail cropped short, half lurcher and half cur,  
His dog attends him Close behind his heel  
Now creeps he slow, and now with many a frisk  
Wide scampering, snatches up the drifted snow  
With ivory teeth, or ploughs it with his snout,  
Then shakes his powdered coat, and barks for joy  
Heedless of all his pranks, the sturdy churl  
Moves right toward the mark, nor stops for aught,  
But now and then with pressure of his thumb  
To adjust the fragrant charge of a short tube  
That fumes beneath his nose the trailing cloud  
Streams far behind him, scenting all the air

*The Task, Book V*

## THE BARNYARD

Now from the roost, or from the neighbouring pale,  
Where, diligent to catch the first faint gleam  
Of smiling day, they gossiped side by side,  
Come trooping at the housewife's well-known call  
The feathered tribes domestic. Half on wing,  
And half on foot, they brush the fleecy flood,  
Conscious, and fearful of too deep a plunge,  
The sparrows peep, and quit the sheltering eaves  
To seize the fair occasion. Well they eye  
The scattered grain, and thievishly resolved  
To escape the impending famine, often scared  
As oft return, a pert voracious kind  
Clean riddance quickly made, one only care  
Remains to each, the search of sunny nook,  
Or shed impervious to the blast. Resigned  
To sad necessity, the cock foregoes  
His wonted strut, and wading at their head  
With well considered steps, seems to resent  
His altered gait and statebness retrenched

*The Task, Book V*

## A BRIGHT DAY IN WINTER

THE night was winter in his roughest mood,  
The morning sharp and clear. But now at noon  
Upon the southern side of the slant hills,  
And where the woods fence off the northern blast,

The season smiles, resigning all its rage,  
And has the warmth of May    The vault is blue  
Without a cloud, and white without a speck  
The dazzling splendour of the scene below  
Again the harmony comes o'er the vale,  
And through the trees I view the embattled tower  
Whence all the music    I again perceive  
The soothing influence of the wafted strains,  
And settle in soft musings as I tread  
The walk, still verdant, under oaks and elms,  
Whose outspread branches overarch the glade  
The roof, though movable through all its length  
As the wind sways it, has yet well sufficed,  
And intercepting in their silent fall  
The frequent flakes, has kept a path for me.  
No noise is here, or none that hinders thought  
The redbreast warbles still, but is content  
With slender notes, and more than half suppressed  
Pleased with his solitude, and flitting light  
From spray to spray, where'er he rests he shakes  
From many a twig the pendent drops of ice,  
That tinkle in the withered leaves below  
Stillness, accompanied with sounds so soft,  
Charms more than silence    Meditation here  
May think down hours to moments    Here the heart  
May give a useful lesson to the head,  
And learning wiser grow without his books  
*The Task, Book VI.*

## THE LESSON OF THE STARS

MAN views it and admires, but rests content  
With what he views    The landscape has his praise,  
But not its Author    Unconcerned who formed  
The paradise he sees, he finds it such,  
And such well pleased to find it, asks no more.  
Not so the mind that has been touched from Heaven,  
And in the school of sacred wisdom taught  
To read His wonders, in whose thought the world,  
Fair as it is, existed ere it was  
The soul that sees Him, or receives sublimed  
New faculties, or learns at least to employ  
More worthily the powers she owned before,  
Discerns in all things what, with stupid gaze  
Of ignorance, till then she overlooked,  
A ray of heavenly light gilding all forms  
Terrestrial, in the vast and the minute,  
The unambiguous footsteps of the God  
Who gives its lustre to an insect's wing,  
And wheels His throne upon the rolling worlds.  
Much conversant with Heaven, she often holds  
With those fair ministers of light to man  
That fill the skies nightly with silent pomp,  
Sweet conference, inquires what strains were they  
With which heaven rang, when every star, in haste  
To gratulate the new-created earth,  
Sent forth a voice, and all the sons of God  
Shouted for joy — "Tell me, ye shining hosts  
That navigate a sea that knows no storms,  
Beneath a vault unsullied with a cloud,

If from your elevation, whence ye view  
Distinctly scenes invisible to man,  
And systems of whose birth no tidings yet  
Have reached this nether world, ye spy a race  
Favoured as ours, transgressors from the womb,  
And hasting to a grave, yet doomed to rise,  
And to possess a brighter heaven than yours ?  
As one who long detained on foreign shores  
Pants to return, and when he sees afar  
His country's weather bleached and battered rocks  
From the green wave emerging, darts an eye  
Radiant with joy towards the happy land,  
So I with animated hopes behold,  
And many an aching wish, your beamy fires,  
That show like beacons in the blue abyss,  
Ordained to guide the embodied spirit home,  
From toilsome life to never ending rest

*The Task, Book V*

POLITICAL



## THE MISERIES OF KINGS

I PITY kings whom worship waits upon  
Obsequious, from the cradle to the throne,  
Before whose infant eyes the flatterer bows,  
And binds a wreath about their baby brow,  
Whom education stiffens into state,  
And death awakens from that dream too late  
Oh ! if servility, with supple knees,  
Whose trade it is to smile, to crouch, to please,—  
If smooth dissimulation, skilled to grace  
A devil's purpose with an angel's face,—  
If smiling peeresses and simpering peers,  
Encomprassing his throne a few short years,—  
If the gilt carriage and the pampered steed,  
That wants no driving and disdains the lead,—  
If guards, mechanically formed in ranks,  
Plying, at beat of drum, their martial pranks,  
Shouldering and standing, as if struck to stone,  
While condescending majesty looks on,—  
If monarchy consist in such base things,  
Sighing, I say again, I pity kings !

To be suspected, thwarted, and withstood,  
Even when he labours for his country's good,—  
To see a band called patriot for no cause  
But that they catch at popular applause,  
Careless of all the anxiety he feels,  
Hook disappointment on the public wheels,

With all their flippant fluency of tongue,  
 Most confident, when palpably most wrong,—  
 If this be kingly, then farewell for me  
 All kingship, and may I be poor and free '  
 To be the Table Talk of clubs up stairs,  
 To which the unwashed artificer repairs,  
 To indulge his genius after long fatigue  
 By diving into cabinet intrigue  
 (For what kings deem a toil, as well they may,  
 To him is relaxation and mere play),—  
 To win no praise when well wrought plans prevail,  
 But to be rudely censured when they fail,—  
 To doubt the love his favourites may pretend,  
 And in reality to find no friend,—  
 If he indulge a cultivated taste,  
 His galleries with the works of art well graced,  
 To hear it called extravagance and waste,  
 If these attendants, and if such as these,  
 Must follow royalty, then welcome ease '  
 However humble and confined the sphere,  
 Happy the state that has not these to fear

*Table Talk*

## BRITISH FREEDOM

—TELL me, if you can, what power maintains  
 A Briton's scorn of arbitrary chains?  
 That were a theme might animate the dead,  
 And move the lips of poets cast in lead

*B* The cause, though worth the search, may yet  
 elude

Conjecture and remark, however shrewd

They take, perhaps, a well directed aim,  
 Who seek it in his climate and his frame  
 Liberal in all things else, yet Nature here  
 With stern severity deals out the year  
 Winter invades the spring, and often pours  
 A chilling flood on summer's drooping flowers,  
 Unwelcome vapours quench autumnal beams,  
 Ungenial blasts attending, curl the streams,  
 The peasants urge their harvest, ply the fork  
 With double toil, and shiver at their work  
 Thus with a rigour, for his good designed,  
 She rears her favourite man of all mankind.  
 His form robust and of elastic tone,  
 Proportioned well, half muscle and half bone,  
 Supplies with warm activity and force  
 A mind well lodged, and masculine of course  
 Hence Liberty, sweet Liberty, inspires  
 And keeps alive his fierce but noble fires  
 Patient of constitutional control,  
 He bears it with meek manliness of soul,  
 But if authority grow wanton, woe  
 To him that treads upon his free-born toe !  
 One step beyond the boundary of the laws  
 Fires him at once in Freedom's glorious cause  
 Thus proud Prerogative, not much revered,  
 Is seldom felt, though sometimes seen and  
     heard,  
 And in his cage, like parrot fine and gay,  
 Is left to strut, look big, and talk away  
     Born in a climate softer far than ours,  
 Not formed like us with such Herculean powers,  
 The Frenchman, easy, debonair, and brisk,  
 Give him his lute, his fiddle, and his frisk  
 Is always happy, reign whoever may,  
 And laughs the sense of misery far away

He drinks his simple beverage with a gust,  
 And feasting on an onion and a crust,  
 We never feel the alacrity and joy  
 With which he shouts and carols, "*Vive le Roy!*"  
 Filled with as much true merriment and glee  
 As if he heard his king say, "Slave, be free!"

Thus happiness depends, as nature shows,  
 Less on exterior things than most suppose  
 Vigilant over all that He has made,  
 Kind Providence attends with gracious aid,  
 Bids equity throughout His works prevail,  
 And weighs the nations in an even scale  
 —Freedom has a thousand charms to show,  
 That slaves, how'er contented, never know  
 The mind attuns beneath her happy reign  
 The growth that Nature meant she should  
 attain,

Religion, richest favour of the skies,  
 Stands most reveal'd before the freeman's eyes,  
 No shades of superstition blot the day,  
 Liberty chases all that gloom away  
 The soul, emancipated, unoppress'd,  
 Free to prove all things, and hold fast the best,  
 Learns much, and to a thousand listening minds,  
 Communicates with joy the good she finds  
 Courage in arms, and ever prompt to show  
 His manly forehead to the fiercest foe,  
 Glorious in war, but for the sake of peace,  
 His spirits rising as his toils increase,  
 Guards well what arts and industry have won,  
 And Freedom claims him for her firstborn son  
 Slaves fight for what were better cast away,  
 The chain that binds them, and a tyrant's sway,  
 But they that fight for freedom; undertake  
 The noblest cause mankind can have at stake,

Religion, virtue, truth, whate'er we call  
 A blessing, freedom is the pledge of all  
 O Liberty ! the prisoner's pleasing dream,  
 The poet's muse, his passion, and his theme,  
 Genius is thine, and thou art Liberty's nurse,  
 Lost without thee the ennobling powers of verse,  
 Heroic song from thy free touch acquires  
 Its clearest tone, the rapture it inspires  
 Place me where Winter breathes his keenest air,  
 And I will sing, if Liberty be there,  
 And I will sing at Liberty's dear feet,  
 In Afric's torrid clime, or India's fiercest heat

*Table Talk*

## THE PATRIOT AND THE MARTYR

PATRIOTS have toil'd, and in their country's cause  
 Bled nobly, and their deeds, as they deserve,  
 Receive proud recompense — We give in charge  
 Their names to the sweet lyre — The historic muse,  
 Proud of the treasure, marches with it down  
 To latest times, and Sculpture, in her turn,  
 Gives bond in stone and ever during brass  
 To guard them, and to immortalise her trust  
 But fairer wreaths are due, though never paid,  
 To those who, posted at the shrine of truth,  
 Have fallen in her defence — A patriot's blood,  
 Well spent in such a strife, may earn indeed,  
 And for a time ensure to his loved land,  
 The sweets of liberty and equal laws  
 But martyrs struggle for a brighter prize

And win it with more pain    Their blood is shed  
In confirmation of the noblest claim,  
Our claim to feed upon immortal truth,  
To walk with God, to be divinely free,  
To soar, and to anticipate the skies  
Yet few remember them    They lived unknown  
Till Persecution dragg'd them into fame,  
And chased them up to heaven    Their ashes flew  
—No marble tells us whither    With their names  
No bard embalms and sanctifies his song,  
And history, so warm on meaner themes,  
Is cold on this.    She execrates indeed  
The tyranny that doomed them to the fire,  
But gives the glorious sufferers little praise

He is the freeman whom the truth makes free,  
And all are slaves beside.    There's not a chain  
That hellish foes confederate for his harm  
Can wind around him, but he casts it off  
With as much ease as Samson his green withes  
He looks abroad into the varied field  
Of nature, and though poor perhaps compared  
With those whose mansions glitter in his sight,  
Calls the delightful scenery all his own  
His are the mountains, and the valleys his,  
And the resplendent rivers    His to enjoy  
With a propriety that none can feel,  
But who, with filial confidence inspired,  
Can lift to heaven an unpretentious eye,  
And smiling say—"My Father made them all!"  
Are they not his by a peculiar right,  
And by an emphasis of interest his,  
Whose eye they fill with tears of holy joy,  
Whose heart with praise, and whose exalted mind  
With worthy thoughts of that unwearied love  
That planned, and built, and still upholds a world

So clothed with beauty, for rebellious man ?  
 Yes—ye may fill your garners, ye that reap  
 The loaded soil, and ye may waste much good  
 In senseless riot, but ye will not find  
 In feast or in the chase, in song or dance,  
 A liberty like his, who unimpeached  
 Of usurpation, and to no man's wrong,  
 Appropriates nature as his Father's work,  
 And has a richer use of yours than you  
 He is indeed a freeman Free by birth  
 Of no mean city, planned or ere the hills  
 Were built, the fountains opened, or the sea  
 With all his roaring multitude of waves  
 His freedom is the same in every State  
 And no condition of this changeful life,  
 So manifold in cares, whose every day  
 Brings its own evil with it, makes it less  
 For he has wings that neither sickness, pain,  
 Nor penury, can cripple or confine  
 No nook so narrow but he spreads them there  
 With ease, and is at large The oppressor holds  
 His body bound, but knows not what a range  
 His spirit takes, unconscious of a chain,  
 And that to bind him is a vain attempt  
 Whom God delights in, and in whom He dwells—  
*The First, Book V*

## THE BASTILLE

PUBLISHED IN 1780, NINE YEARS BEFORE THE FALL  
OF THE BASTILLE.

THEN shame to manhood, and opprobrious more  
To France than all her losses and defeats,  
Old or of later date, by sea or land,  
Her house of bondage, worse than that of old  
Which God avenged on Pharaoh—the Bastille.  
Ye horrid towers, the abode of broken hearts,  
Ye dungeons, and ye cages of despair,  
That monarchs have supplied from age to age  
With music such as suits their sovereign ears,  
The sighs and groans of miserable men !  
There's not an English heart that would not leap  
To hear that ye were fallen at last, to know  
That even our enemies, so oft employed  
In forging chains for us, themselves were free  
For he who values liberty confines  
His zeal for her predominance within  
No narrow bounds, her cause engages him  
Wherever pleaded 'Tis the cause of man  
There dwell the most forlorn of human kind,  
Immured though unaccused, condemned untried,  
Cruelly spared, and hopeless of escape.  
There, like the visionary emblem seen  
By him of Babylon, life stands a stump,  
And, filleted about with hoops of brass,  
Still lives, though all its pleasant boughs are gone  
To count the hour bell, and expect no change

And ever as the sullen sound is heard,  
 Still to reflect, that though a joyless note  
 To him whose moments all have one dull pace,  
 Ten thousand rovers in the world at large  
 Account it music, that it summons some  
 To theatre or jocund feast or ball,  
 The wearied hireling finds it a release  
 From labour, and the lover, who has chid  
 Its long delay, feels every welcome stroll  
 Upon his heart strings, trembling with delight —  
 To fly for refuge from distracting thought  
 To such amusements as ingenious woe  
 Contrives, hard shifting and without her tools —  
 To read engraven on the mouldy walls,  
 In staggering types, his predecessor's tale,  
 A sad memorial, and subjoin his own —  
 To turn purveyor to an overgorge  
 And bloated spider, till the pumpered pest  
 Is made familiar, watches his approach,  
 Comes at his call, and serves him for a friend —  
 To wear out time in numbering to and fro  
 The studs that thick emboss his iron door,  
 Then downward and then upward, then askant,  
 And then alternate, with a sickly hope  
 By dint of change to give his tasteless task  
 Some relish, till the sum exactly found  
 In all directions, he begins again —  
 Oh comfortless existence ! hemm'd around  
 With woes, which who that suffers would not kneel  
 And beg for exile, or the pangs of death ?  
 That man should thus encroach on fellow men,  
 Abridge him of his just and native rights,  
 Eradicate him, tear him from his hold  
 Upon the endearments of domestic life  
 And social, nip his fruitfulness in bud .

And doom him for perhaps a heedless word  
 To barrenness, and solitude, and tears,  
 Moves indignation, makes the name of King  
 (Of king whom such prerogative can please)  
 As dreadful as the Manichean God,  
 Adored through fear, strong only to destroy  
*The Task, Book V*

### TRUE LOYALTY

We too are friends to loyalty    We love  
 The king who loves the law, respects his bounds,  
 And reigns content within them    him we serve  
 Freely and with delight, who leaves us free  
 But recollecting still that he is man,  
 We trust him not too far    King though he be,  
 And king in England too, he may be weak,  
 And vain enough to be ambitious still,  
 May exercise amiss his proper powers,  
 Or covet more than freemen choose to grant  
 Beyond that mark is treason    He is ours,  
 To administer, to guard, to adorn the State,  
 But not to warp or change it.    We are his,  
 To serve him nobly in the common cause,  
 True to the death, but not to be his slaves  
 Mark now the difference, ye that boast your love  
 Of kings, between your loyalty and ours  
 We love the man, the paltry pageant you,  
 We the chief patron of the commonwealth,  
 You the regardless author of its woes,  
 We, for the sake of liberty, a king,

You chains and bondage for a tyrant's sale.  
 Our love is principle, and has its root  
 In reason, is judicious, manly, free,  
 Yours, a blind instinct, crouches to the rod  
 And licks the foot that treads it in the dust.  
 Were kingship its true treasure or it seems,  
 Sterling, and worthy of a wise man's wish,  
 I would not be a king to be beloved  
 Causeless, and daubed with unlearning praise  
 Where love is mere attachment to the throne,  
 Not to the man who fills it as he ought.

*The Task, Book 1*

## PATRIOTISM

ENGLAND, with all thy faults, I love thee still  
 My country I and, while yet a root is left  
 Where English minds and manners may be found,  
 Shall be constrained to love thee. Though thy clime  
 Be sickle, and thy year, most part, deformed  
 With dripping rains, or withered by a frost,  
 I would not yet exchange thy sullen fies  
 And fields without a flower, for warmer France  
 With all her vines, nor for Ausonia's groves  
 Of golden fruitage, and her myrtle bowers  
 To shale thy senate, and from heights sublime  
 Of patriot eloquence to flash down fire  
 Upon thy foes, war never meant my trial,  
 But I can feel thy fortunes, and partake  
 Thy joys and sorrow with a true heart  
 As any thunderer there. And I can feel

Thy follies too, and with a just disdain  
Frown at effeminates, whose very looks  
Reflect dishonour on the land I love.  
How, in the name of soldiership and sense,  
Should England prosper, when such things, as smooth  
And tender as a girl, all essenced o'er  
With odours, and as profligate as sweet,  
Who sell their laurel for a myrtle wreath,  
And love when they should fight,—when such as these  
Presume to lay their hand upon the ark  
Of her magnificent and awful cause?  
Time was when it was praise and boast enough  
In every clime, and travel where we might,  
That we were born her children, praise enough  
To fill the ambition of a private man,  
That Chatham's language was his mother tongue,  
And Wolfe's great name compatriot with his own  
Farewell those honours, and farewell with them  
The hope of such hereafter! They have fallen  
Each in his field of glory one in arms,  
And one in council—Wolfe upon the lap  
Of smiling Victory that moment won,  
And Chatham, heart sick of his country's shame!  
They made us many soldiers Chatham still  
Consulting England's happiness at home,  
Secured it by an unforgiving frown  
If any wronged her Wolfe, where'er he fought,  
Put so much of his heart into his act,  
That his example had a magnet's force,  
And all were swift to follow whom all loved  
Those suns are set Oh rise some other such!  
Or all that we have left is empty talk  
Of old achievements, and despair of new

## AGAINST SLAVERY

Oh for a lodge in some vast wilderness,  
Some boundless contiguity of shade,  
Where rumour of oppression and deceit,  
Of unsuccessful or successful war,  
Might never reach me more ! My ear is pain'd,  
My soul is sick with every day's report  
Of wrong and outrage with which earth is fill'd  
There is no flesh in man's obdurate heart—  
It does not feel for man, the natural bond  
Of brotherhood is sever'd as the flax  
That falls asunder at the touch of fire  
He finds his fellow guilty of a skin  
Not colour'd like his own, and having power  
To enforce the wrong, for such a worthy cause  
Dooms and devotes him as his lawful prey  
Lands intersected by a narrow strith  
Abhor each other Mountains interposed,  
Make enemies of nations, who had else  
Like kindred drops been mingled into one  
Thus man devotes his brother, and destroys  
And worse than all, and most to be deplored  
As human Nature's broadest, foulest blot,  
Chains him, and tasks him, and exacts his sweat  
With stripes, that Mercy with a bleeding heart  
Weeps when she sees inflicted on a beast.  
Then what is man ? And what man seeing this,  
And having human feelings, does not blush  
And hang his head, to think himself a man ?  
I would not have a slave to till my ground,

To carry me, to fan me while I sleep,  
 And tremble when I wake, for all the wealth  
 That snaws bought and sold have ever earn'd  
 No dear as freedom is, and in my heart's  
 Just estimation prized above all price,  
 I had much rather be myself the slave  
 And wear the bonds, than fasten them on him  
 We have no slaves at home — Then why abroad?  
 And they themselves once ferried o'er the wave  
 That parts us, are emancipate and loosed  
 Slaves cannot breathe in England, if their lungs  
 Receive our air, that moment they are free,  
 They touch our country, and their shackles fall  
 That's noble, and bespeaks a nation proud  
 And jealous of the blessing — Spread it then,  
 And let it circulate through every vein  
 Of all your empire, that where Britain's power  
 Is felt, mankind may feel her mercy too  
*The Task, Book II*

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Heaven speed the canvass, gallantly unfurled  
 To furnish and accommodate a world,  
 To give the pole the produce of the sun,  
 And knit the unsocial climates into one. —  
 Soft airs and gentle heavings of the wave  
 Impel the fleet, whose errand is to save,  
 To succour wasted regions, and replace  
 The smile of opulence in sorrow's face. —  
 Let nothing adverse, nothing unforeseen,  
 Impede the bark that ploughs the deep serene,  
 Charged with a freight transcending in its worth  
 The gems of India, nature's rarest birth,  
 That fleet, like Gabriel on his Lord's commands,  
 A herald of God's love to pagan lands.

But ah ! what wish can prosper, or what prayer,  
 For merchants rich in cargoes of despair,  
 Who drive a loathsome traffic, gauge and span,  
 And buy the muscles and the bones of man ?  
 The tender ties of father, husband, friend,  
 All bonds of nature in that moment end,  
 And each endures, while yet he draws his breath,  
 A stroke as fatal as the scythe of death  
 The sable warrior, frantic with regret  
 Of her he loves, and never can forget,  
 Loses in tears the far receding shore,  
 But not the thought that they must meet no  
 more,

Deprived of her and freedom at a blow,  
 What has he left, that he can yet forego ?  
 Yes, to deep sadness sullenly resigned,  
 He feels his body's bondage in his mind,  
 Puts off his generous nature, and, to suit  
 His manners with his fate, puts on the brute.

O most degrading of all ills, that wait  
 On man, a mourner in his best estate !  
 All other sorrows virtue may endure,  
 And find submission more than half a cure  
 Grief is itself a medicine, and he towed  
 To improve the fortitude that bears the load,  
 To teach the wanderer, as his woes increase,  
 The path of Wisdom, all whose paths are peace,  
 But slavery — Virtue dreads it as her grave  
 Patience itself is meanness in a slave  
 Or if the will and sovereignty of God  
 Bid suffer it awhile, and bless the rod  
 Wait for the dawning of a brighter day,  
 And snap the chain the moment when you may.  
 Nature imprints up\* a white'er we see  
 That has a heart and life in it, " Be free "

The beasts are chartered—neither age nor force  
 Can quell the love of freedom in a horse  
 He breaks the cord that held him at the rack,  
 And, conscious of an unencumbered back,  
 Snuffs up the morning air, forgets the rein,  
 Loose fly his forelock and his ample mane,  
 Responsive to the distant neigh he neighs,  
 Nor stops, till, oversleping all delays,  
 He finds the pasture where his fellows graze.

Canst thou, and honour'd with a Christian name,  
 Buy what is woman born, and feel no shame?  
 Trade in the blood of innocence, and plead  
 Expedience as a warrant for the deed?  
 So may the wolf, whom famine has made bold  
 To quit the forest and invade the fold  
 So may the ruffian, who with ghostly glide,  
 Digger in hand, steals close to your bedside,  
 Not he, but his emergence, forced the door,  
 He found it inconvenient to be poor  
 Has God then given its sweetness to the cane,  
 Unless His laws be trampled on—in vain?  
 Built a brave world, which cannot yet subsist,  
 Unless His right to rule it be dismiss'd?  
 Impudent blasphemy! So Folly pleads,  
 And Avarice being judge, with ease succeeds

*Charity*

## THE SOUTH SEA ISLANDER.

THESE therefore I can pity, placed remote  
 From all that science traces, art invents,  
 Or inspiration teaches, and enclosed  
 In boundless oceans, never to be pass'd  
 By navigators uninform'd as they,  
 Or plough'd perhaps by British bark again  
 But far beyond the rest, and with most cause,  
 Thee, gentle savage !\* whom no love of thee  
 Or thine, but curiosity perhaps,  
 Or else vain glory, prompted us to draw  
 Forth from thy native bowers, to show thee here  
 With what superior skill we can abuse  
 The gifts of Providence, and squander life  
 The dream is past — and thou hast found again  
 Thy cocoa and bananas, palms and yams,  
 And homestall thatch'd with leaves — Hast thou  
 found

Their former charms? And having seen our state,  
 Our palaces, our ladies, and our pomp  
 Of equipage, our gardens, and our sports,  
 And heard our music, are thy simple friends,  
 Thy simple fire, and all thy plain delight  
 As dear to thee as once? And have the joys  
 Lost nothing by comparison with ours?  
 Rude as thou art (for we returned thee rude  
 And ignorant, except of outward show)  
 I cannot think thee yet so dull of heart  
 And spiritless, as we are to regret

\* Omai, interpreter at the Cape of Good Hope, was the first of the South Sea Islanders who visited Europe.

Sweets tasted here, and left as soon as known.  
Methinks I see thee straying on the beach,  
And asking of the surge that bathes thy foot  
If ever it has washed our distant shore.  
I see thee weep, and thine are honest tears,  
A patriot's for his country thou art sad  
At thought of her forlorn and abject state,  
From which no power of thine can raise her up  
Thus fancy paints thee, and, though apt to err,  
Perhaps errs little when she paints thee thus.  
She tells me too, that duly every morn  
Thou climb'st the mountain top, with eager eye  
Exploring far and wide the watery waste  
For sight of ship from England Every speck  
Seen in the dim horizon turns thee pale  
With conflict of contending hopes and fears  
But comes at last the dull and dusky eve,  
And sends thee to thy cabin, well prepared  
To dream all night of what the day denied  
Alas I expect it not We found no bait  
To tempt us in thy country Doing good,  
Disinterested good, is not our trade  
We travel far, 'tis true, but not for nought,  
And must be bribed to compass earth again  
By other hopes and richer fruits than yours  
*The Task, Book I*

## PITY FOR POOR AFRICANS

*Vides meliora proboque  
Deteriora sequor —*

I own I am shocked at the purchase of slaves,  
And fear those who buy them and sell them are knaves,  
What I hear of their hardships, their tortures, and groans  
Is almost enough to draw pity from stones.

I pity them greatly, but I must be man,  
For how could we do without sugar and rum?  
Especially sugar, so needful we see,  
What! give up our desserts, our coffee, and tea?

Besides, if we do, the French, Dutch, and Diner  
Will heartily thank us, no doubt, for our pain.  
If we do not buy the poor creatures, they will,  
And tortures and groans will be multiplied still.

If foreigners likewise would give up the trade,  
Much more in behalf of you it might be said,  
But while they get riches by purchasing blacks,  
Pray tell me why we may not also go and catch?

Your scruples and arguments bring, to my mind  
A story so pat, you may think it is cited,  
On purpose to answer you, out of my mind  
But I can assure you I say it in print.

A youngster at school, more white than the rest,  
• Had once his integrity put to the test  
His comrades had plotted an expedition to rob,  
And asked him to go and be first in the job.

He was shocked, sir, like you, and answered—"Oh, no!  
What! rob our good neighbour? I pray you don't go,  
Besides, the man's poor, his orchard's his bread  
Then think of his children, for they must be fed"

"You speak very fine, and you look very grave,  
But apples we want, and apples we'll have  
If you will go with us, you shall have a share,  
If not, you shall have neither apple nor pear"

They spoke, and Tom pondered—"I see they will go  
Poor man! what a pity to injure him so!  
Poor man! I would save him his fruit if I could,  
But staying behind will do him no good

"If the matter depended alone upon me,  
His apples might hang till they dropped from the tree,  
But since they will take them, I think I'll go too,  
He will lose none by me, though I get a few"

His scruples thus silenced, Tom felt more at ease,  
And went with his comrades the apples to seize,  
He blamed and protested, but joined in the plan,  
He shared in the plunder, but pitied the man

## THE MORNING DREAM

'Twas in the glad season of spring,  
Asleep at the dawn of the day,  
I dreamed what I cannot but sing,  
So pleasant it seemed as I lay

I dreamed that, on ocean afloat,  
 Far hence to the westward I sailed,  
 While the billows high lifted the boat,  
 And the fresh blowing breeze never failed

In the steerage a woman I saw,  
 Such at least was the form that she wore,  
 Whose beauty impressed me with awe,  
 Never taught me by woman before  
 She sat, and a shield at her side  
 Shed light, like a sun on the water,  
 And smiling divinely, she cried—  
 “I go to make freemen of slaves!”

Then raising her voice to a strain  
 The sweetest that ear ever heard,  
 She sang of the slave's broken chain  
 Wherever her glory appeared  
 Some clouds, which had over us hung,  
 I felt, chased by her melody clear,  
 And methought while she liberty sung  
 'Twas liberty only to hear

Thus swiftly dividing the flood  
 To a slave cultured island we came,  
 Where a Demon, her enemy, stood—  
 Oppression his terrible name  
 In his hand, as the sign of his sway  
 A scourge hung, with lashes he bore  
 And stood looking out for his prey  
 From Africa's sorrowful shore

But soon as approaching the land  
 That guide—like a woman he moved,  
 The scourge, & he fell from his hand,  
 With blood of his subjects red

I saw him both sicken and die,  
And, the moment the monster expired,  
Heard shouts that ascended the sky,  
From thousands with rapture inspired

Awaking, how could I but muse  
At what such a dream should betide?  
But soon my ear caught the glad news,  
Which served my weak thought for a guide,—  
That Britannia, renowned o'er the waves  
For the hatred she ever has shown  
To the black sceptred rulers of slaves,  
Resolves to have none of her own

PORTRAITS AND  
CHARACTERS



## THE KING

Oh ! bright occasions of dispensing good,  
How seldom used, how little understood !  
To pour in Virtue's lap her just reward ,  
Keep Vice restrain'd behind a double guard ,  
To quell the faction that affronts the throne  
By silent magnanimity alone ,  
To nurse with tender care the thriving arts,  
Watch every beam philosophy imparts  
To give Religion her unbridled scope,  
Nor judge by statute a believer's hope ,  
With close fidelity and love unfeigned  
To keep the matrimonial bond unstain'd ,  
Covetous only of a virtuous, praise  
His life a lesson to the land he sways ,  
To touch the sword with conscientious awe  
Nor draw it but when duty bids him draw ,  
To sheath it in the peace restoring clove  
With joy beyond what victory bestows -  
Blest country ! where these brightly glories shine  
Blest England ! if this happiness be thine

*Table III*

## THE STATESMAN

(CHATHAM )

IN him, Demosthenes was heard again,  
 Liberty taught him her Athenian strain ,  
 She clothed him with authority and awe,  
 Spoke from his lips, and in his looks gave law  
 His speech, his form, his action, full of grace,  
 And all his country beaming in his face,  
 He stood, as some inimitable hand  
 Would strive to make a Paul or Tully stand  
 No sycophant or slave that dared oppose  
 Her sacred cause, but trembled when he rose,  
 And every venal stickler for the yoke  
 Felt himself crushed at the first word he spoke  
*Table Talk*

## THE SOLDIER

LET laurels, drenched in pure Parnassian dews,  
 Reward his memory, dear to every muse,  
 Who, with a courage of unshaken root,  
 In honour's field advancing his firm foot,  
 Plants it upon the line that justice draws,  
 And will prevail or perish in her cause  
 And when recording History displays  
 Feats of renown, though wrought in ancient days,  
 Tells of a few stout hearts that fought and died  
 Whose duty placed them, at their country's side,—

The man that is not moved with what he reads,  
 That takes not fire at their heroic deeds,  
 Unworthy of the blessings of the brave,  
 Is base in kind, and born to be a slave

*Tall Tale*

## THE POET

I KNOW the mind that feels indeed the fire  
 The Muse imparts, and can command the lyre,  
 Acts with a force, and kindles with a zeal,  
 What'er the theme, that others never feel  
 She pours a sensibility divine  
 Along the nerve of every feeling line  
 But if a deed not timely to be borne,  
 I fire indignation and a sense of scorn  
 The strings are swept with such a power, so loud,  
 The storm of music shakes th' astonished crowd  
 So, when remote futurity is brought  
 Before the keen inquiry of her thought,  
 A terrible signifiy informs  
 The poet's heart, he looks to distant storms  
 He hears the thunder ere the tempest lowers,  
 And, armed with strength surpassing human power  
 Seizes events as yet unknown to man  
 And darts his soul into the drawing plan  
 Hence, in a Roman mouth, the prophetic name  
 Of prophet and of poet was the same

*Little Tales*



Her eyebrows arched, her eyes both gone astray  
 To watch yon amorous couple in their play,  
 With bony and unkerchiefed neck defies  
 The rude inclemency of wintry skies,  
 And sails with lappet head and mincing air  
 Duly at clink of bell, to morning prayers  
 To thrift and parsimony much inclined,  
 She yet allows herself that boy behind,  
 The shivering urchin, bending as he goes,  
 With slipshod heels, and dew drop at his nose,  
 His predecessor's coat advanced to wear,  
 Which future pages are yet doomed to share  
 Carries her Bible tucked beneath his arm,  
 And hides his hands to keep his fingers warm

She, half an angel in her own account,  
 Doubts not hereafter with the saints to mount  
 Though not a grace appears on strict search,  
 But that she fasts, and, *item*, goes to church  
 Conscious of age, she recollects her youth,  
 And tells, not always with an eye to truth,  
 Who spanned her waist, and who, where'er he came,  
 Scrawled upon glass Miss Impet's lovely name,  
 Who stole her slipper, filled it with Tokay,  
 And drank the little bumper every day  
 Of temper as envenomed as an asp,  
 Censorious, and her every word a asp  
 In faithful memory she records the crimes  
 Or real or fictitious of the times,  
 Laughs at the reputations she has torn  
 And holds them dangling at arm's length in scorn

## THE PHILOSOPHER AND PEASANT

THE Frenchman first in literary fame  
 ("Mention him, if you please—*Volture?*"—The same),  
 With spirit, genius, eloquence supplied,  
 Lived long, wrote much, laughed heartily, and died  
 The Scripture was his jest book, whence he drew  
*Bon mots* to gill the Christian and the Jew,  
 An infidel in health, but what when sick?  
 Oh—then a text would touch him at the quick  
 View him at Paris in his last career,  
 Surrounding throngs the demigod revere,  
 Exalted on his pedestal of pride,  
 And fumed with frankincense on every side,  
 He begs their flattery with his latest breath,  
 And smothered in't at last, is praised to death  
 Yon cottager, who serves at her own door,  
 Pillow and bobbins all her little store;  
 Content though mean, and cheerful if not gay,  
 Shuffling her threads about the live long day,  
 Just earns a scanty pittance, and at night  
 Lies down secure, her heart and soul at light  
 She, for her humble sphere by nature fit,  
 Has little understanding, and no wit,  
 Receives no praise—but though her lot be such  
 (Toilsome and indigent), she renders much,  
 Just knows, and knows no more, her Bible true—  
 A truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew,  
 And in that charter reads with sparkling eyes  
 Her title to a treasure in the skies

O happy peasant ! O unhappy bard !  
 His the mere tinsel, hers the rich reward ,  
 He praised perhaps for ages yet to come,  
 She never heard of half a mile from home  
 He lost in errors his vain heart prefers,  
 She safe in the simplicity of hers.

*Truth*

## THE RELIGIOUS REFORMER

(WHITTIER)

LET CONVOULS (beneath well sounding Greek  
 I slur a name a poet must not speak)  
 Stood pilloried on infamy's high stage,  
 And bore the pelting scorn of half an age  
 The very butt of slander, and the blot  
 For every dart that malice ever shot  
 The man that mentioned *him* at once dismissed  
 All mercy from his lips, and sneered, and hissed  
 His crimes were such as Sodom never knew,  
 And Perjury stood up to swear all true,  
 His aim was mischief, and his real pretence,  
 His speech rebellion against common sense  
 A slave, when tried on honesty's plain table,  
 And when by that of reason, a mere fool  
 The world's best comfort was his doom was passed  
 Die when he might, he must be damned at last

Now, Truth, perform thine office well as thou  
 The curtain drawn by prejudice and pride,  
 Reveal (the man is dead) his monstrous eye  
 This more than monster in his proper guise  
 He loved the world that hated him the more  
 That dropped upon his life a curse and sore

Assailed by scandal and the tongue of strife,  
 His only answer was a blameless life  
 And he that forged, and he that threw the dart,  
 Had each a brother's interest in his heart  
 Paul's love of Christ, and sterdiness unbribed,  
 Were copied close in him, and well transcribed  
 He followed Paul his zeal a kindred flame,  
 His apostolic charity the same  
 Like him, crossed cheerfully tempestuous seas,  
 Forsaking country, kindred, friends, and ease  
 Like him he laboured, and like him content  
 To bear it, suffered shame where'er he went

Blush, Calumny, and write upon his tomb,  
 If honest eulogy can spare thee room,  
 Thy deep repentance of thy thousand lies,  
 Which aimed at him, have pierced the offended skies  
 And say, "Blot out my sin, confessed, deplored,  
 Against Thine image in Thy saint, O Lord!"

*Hope*

## THE CHRISTIAN

A CHRISTIAN's wit is inoffensive light,  
 A beam that aids but never grieves the sight;  
 Vigorous in age as in the flush of youth,  
 'Tis always active on the side of truth,  
 Temperance and peace insure its healthful state  
 And make it brightest at its latest date  
 Oh I have seen (nor hope perhaps in vain,  
 Ere life go down, to see such sights again)  
 A veteran warrior in the Christian field,  
 Who never saw the sword he could not wield,

Grave without dulness, learned without pride,  
 Exact, yet not precise, though meek, keen eyed  
 A man that would have soiled at their own play  
 A dozen would be's of the modern day  
 Who, when occasion justified its use,  
 Had wit as bright as ready to produce,  
 Could fetch from records of an earlier age,  
 Or from philosophy's enlightened page,  
 His rich materials, and regale your ear  
 With strains it was a privilege to hear  
 Yet above all his luxury supreme,  
 And his chief glory, was the gospel theme,  
 There he was copious as old Greece or Rome,  
 His happy eloquence seemed there at home,  
 Ambitious not to shine or to excel,  
 But to treat justly what he loved so well

*Constitution*

## THE PHILANTHROPIST

PATRON of else the most despised of men,  
 Accept the tribute of a stranger's pen,  
 Versed, like the laurel, in immortal meek,  
 Should be the garland of a noble deed,  
 I may alarm thee, but I fear the shame  
 (Charity chosen as my theme and aim)  
 I must incur, forgetting Howard's name  
 Blest with all wealth can give thee, to resign  
 Joys doubly sweet to feeling quail and shun  
 To quit the blissful rural scenes below,  
 To seek a nobler amidst scenes of woe

To traverse seas, range kingdoms, and bring home  
 Not the proud monuments of Greece or Rome,  
 But knowledge such as only dungeons teach  
 And only sympathy like thine could reach ;  
 That grief, sequestered from the public stage,  
 Might smooth her feathers, and enjoy her cage ,  
 Speaks a divine ambition, and a zeal,  
 The boldest patriot might be proud to feel  
 Oh that the voice of clamour and debate,  
 That pleads for peace till it disturbs the State,  
 Were hushed in favour of thy generous plea,  
 The poor thy clients, and Heaven's smile thy fee '  
*Clarity*

## THE WEARY STATESMAN

" Ye groves," the statesman at his desk exclaims,  
 Sick of a thousand disappointed aims,  
 " My patrimonial treasure and my pride,  
 Beneath your shades your gory possessor hide  
 Receive me languishing for that repose  
 The servant of the public never I know.  
 Ye saw me once (ah those regretted days,  
 When boyish innocence was all my praise ' )  
 Hour after hour delightfully allot  
 To studies then familiar, since forgot,  
 And cultivate a taste for ancient song,  
 Catching its ardour as I mused along ,  
 Nor seldom, as propitious Heaven might send,  
 What once I valued and could boast, a friend,

Were witnesses how cordially I pressed  
 His undissembling virtue to my breast -  
 Receive me now, not uncorrupt as then,  
 Nor guiltless of corrupting other men,  
 But versed in arts, that, while they seem to stay  
 A fallen empire, hasten its decay  
 To the fair haven of my native home,  
 The wreck of what I was, fatigued I come,  
 For once I can approve the patriot's voice,  
 And make the course he recommends my choice  
 We meet at last in one sincere desire,  
 His wish and mine both prompt me to retire "  
 'Tis done—he steps into the welcome chaise,  
 Lolls at his ease behind four handsome bays,  
 That whirl away from business and debate  
 The disencumbered Atlas of the state  
 Ask not the boy, who, when the breeze of morn  
 First shakes the glittering drops from every thorn  
 Unfolds his flock, then under burl or bush  
 Sits hurling cherry stones, or plucking rush,  
 How fair is freedom?—he was always free  
 To carve his rustic name upon a tree,  
 To snare the mole, or with all fashioned hook  
 To draw the incautious minnow from the brook  
 Are life's prime pleasures in his simple view,  
 His flock the chief concern he ever knew  
 But ask the noble drudge in state affairs,  
 Escaped from office and its constant cares,  
 What charms he sees in freedom's smile express'd  
 In freedom lost so long, now repossess'd,  
 The tongue, whose strains were cogent as com-  
 mands,  
 Revered at home, and felt in foreign land  
 Shall own itself a thermometer in that case  
 Or plead its silence as its best advantage

He knows indeed that, whether dressed or rude,  
 Wild without art, or artfully subdued,  
 Nature in every form inspires delight,  
 But never marked her with so just a sight  
 Her hedge row shrubs, a variegated store,  
 With woodbine and wild roses mantled o'er,  
 Green balks and furrowed lands, the stream that spreads  
 Its cooling vapour o'er the dewy meads,  
 Downs, that almost escape the inquiring eye,  
 That melt and fade into the distant sky,  
 Beauties he lately slighted as he passed,  
 Seem all created since he travelled last  
 Master of all the enjoyments he designed,  
 No rough annoyance rankling in his mind,  
 What early philosophic hours he keeps,  
 How regular his meals, how sound he sleeps !  
 Not sounder he that on the mainmast head,  
 While morning kindles with a windy red,  
 Begins a long look out for distant land,  
 Nor quits till evening watch his giddy stand,  
 Then swift descending with a seaman's haste,  
 Slips to his hammock, and forgets the blast  
 He chooses company, but not the squire's,  
 Whose wit is rudeness, whose good breeding tires ,  
 Nor yet the parson's, who would gladly come,  
 Obsequious when abroad, though proud at home ,  
 Nor can he much affect the neighbouring peer,  
 Whose toe of emulation treads too near ,  
 But wisely seeks a more convenient friend,  
 With whom, dismissing forms, he may unbend  
 A man whom marks of condescending grace  
 Teach, while they flatter him, his proper place  
 Who comes when called, and at a word withdraws,  
 Speaks with reserve, and listens with applause ,

Yet how fallacious is all earthly bliss,  
 What obvious truths the wisest heads may miss !  
 Some pleasures live a month, and some a year,  
 But short the date of all we gather here,  
 No happiness is felt except the true,  
 That does not charm the more for being new  
 This observation, as it chanced, not made,  
 Or, if the thought occurred not duly weigh'd,  
 He sighs—for after all, by slow degrees,  
 The spot he loved has lost the power to please  
 To cross his ambling pony day by day  
 Seems at the best but dreaming life away  
 The prospect, such as might enchant despair,  
 He views it not, or sees no beauty there,  
 With aching heart, and discontented looks,  
 Returns at noon to lullards or to books,  
 But feels, while grasping at his faded joys—  
 A secret thirst of his renounced employ  
 He chides the tardiness of every post,  
 Pants to be told of battles won or lost,  
 Blames his own indolence, observes, though late  
 'Tis criminal to leave a sinking state  
 He lies to the levee, and, received with grace  
 Kneels, kisses hands, and clings again in place  
The end

## THE LOVER

THE lover too shows himself an alien  
 Tender idolater of his own charm—  
 Sings, offers nothing in the truest way  
 That he deserves not with a real like thee

'Tis consecration of his heart, soul, time,  
 And every thought that wanders is a crime.  
 In sighs he worships his supremely fair,  
 And weeps a sad libation in despair,  
 Adores a creature, and devout in vain,  
 Wins in return an answer of disdain.  
 As woodbine weds the plant within her reach,  
 Rough elm, or smooth-grain'd ash, or glossy  
 beech,

In spiral rings ascends the trunk, and lays  
 Her golden tassels on the leafy sprays,  
 But does a mischief while she lends a grace,  
 Straitening its growth by such a strict embrace,  
 So love, that clings around the noblest minds,  
 Forbids the advancement of the soul he binds,  
 The suitor's air indeed he soon improves,  
 And forms it to the taste of her he loves,  
 Teaches his eyes a language, and no less  
 Refines his speech and fashions his address;  
 But farewell promises of happier fruits,  
 Manly designs, and learning's grave pursuits,  
 Girt with a chain he cannot wish to break,  
 His only bliss is sorrow for her sake;  
 Who will may pant for glory and excel,  
 Her smile his aim, all higher aims farewell!  
 Thyrsis, Alexis, or whatever name  
 May least offend against so pure a flame,  
 Though sage advice of friends the most sincere  
 Sounds harshly in so delicate an ear,  
 And lovers, of all creatures, tame or wild,  
 Can least brook management, however mild,  
 Yet let a poet (poetry disarms  
 The fiercest animals with magic charms)  
 Risk an intrusion on thy pensive mood,  
 And woo and win thee to thy proper good

Pastoral images and still retreats,  
 Umbrageous walks and solitary seats,  
 Sweet birds in concert with harmonious streams,  
 Soft airs, nocturnal vigils, and day dreams,  
 Are all enchantments in a case like thine,  
 Conspire against thy peace with one design.  
 Soothe thee to make thee but a surer prey,  
 And feed the fire that wastes thy powers away  
 Up—God has formed thee with a wiser view,  
 Not to be led in chains, but to subdue  
 Calls thee to cope with enemies, and first  
 Points out a conflict with thyself, the worst  
 Woman indeed, a gift He would bestow  
 When He designed a paradise below,  
 The richest earthly boon His hands afford,  
 Deserves to be beloved, but not adored  
 Post away swiftly to more active scenes,  
 Collect the scattered truths that study glean  
 Mix with the world, but with its wiser part  
 No longer give an image all thine heart,  
 Its empire is not hers, nor is it thine,  
 'Tis God's just claim, prerogative divine

*Act 11*

## CLERGYMEN GOOD AND BAD

I VENERATE the man whose heart is warm,  
 Whose hands are pure, whose doctrine and whose life  
 Coincident, exhibit lucid proof  
 That he is honest in the sacred cause  
 But loose in morals, and in manners vain,

In conversation frivolous, in dress  
 Extreme, at once rapacious and profuse,  
 Constant at routs, familiar with a round  
 Of ladyships, & stranger to the poor,  
 Ambitious of preferment for its gold,  
 And well prepared by ignorance and sloth  
 By infidelity and love o' the world,  
 To make God's work a sinecure, a slave  
 To his own pleasures and his patron's pride —  
 From such apostles, O ye mitred heads,  
 Preserve the church! and lay not careless hands  
 On skulls that cannot teach, and will not learn

Would I describe a preacher, such as Paul,  
 Were he on earth, would hear, approve, and own,  
 Paul should himself direct me. I would trace  
 His master strokes, and draw from his design.  
 I would express him simple, grave, sincere,  
 In doctrine uncorrupt, in language plain,  
 And plain in manner, decent, solemn, chaste,  
 And natural in gesture, much impressed  
 Himself, as conscious of his awful charge,  
 And anxious mainly that the flock he feeds  
 May feel it too, affectionate in look,  
 And tender in address, as well becomes  
 A messenger of grace to guilty men

*The Task, Book II*

## THE RECLUSE

HE is the happy man, whose life even now  
 Shows somewhat of that happier life to come,  
 Who, doomed to an obscure but tranquil state,  
 Is pleased with it, and, were he free to choose,  
 Would make his fate his choice, whom peace, the fruit  
 Of virtue, and whom virtue, fruit of faith,  
 Prepare for happiness, bespeak him one  
 Content indeed to sojourn while he must  
 Below the skies, but having there his home.  
 The world o'erlooks him in her busy search  
 Of objects more illustrious in her view,  
 And occupied as earnestly as she,  
 Though more sublimely, he o'erlooks the world  
 She scorns his pleasures, for she knows them not,  
 He seeks not hers, for he has proved them vain  
 He cannot skim the ground like summer birds  
 Pursuing gilded flies, and such he deems  
 Her honours, her emoluments, her joys  
 Therefore in contemplation is his bliss,  
 Whose power is such, that whom she lifts from earth  
 She makes familiar with a heaven unseen,  
 And shows him glories yet to be revealed  
 Not slothful he, though seeming unemployed,  
 And censured oft as useless    Stillest streams  
 Oft water fairest meadows, and the bird  
 That flutters least is longest on the wing  
 Ask him, indeed, what trophies he has raised,  
 Or what achievements of immortal fame  
 He purposes, and he shall answer—None

His warfare is within    There unfatigued  
 His fervent spirit labours.    There he fights,  
 And there obtains fresh triumphs o'er himself,  
 And never withering wreaths, compared with which  
 The laurels that a Cæsar reaps are weeds  
 Perhaps the self approving haughty world,  
 That as she sweeps him with her whistling silks  
 Scarce deigns to notice him, or, if she see,  
 Deems him a cipher in the works of God,  
 Receives advantage from his noiseless hours,  
 Of which she little dreams.    Perhaps she owes  
 Her sunshine and her rain, her blooming spring  
 And plenteous harvest, to the prayer he makes,  
 When, Isaac like, the solitary saint  
 Walks forth to meditate at eventide,  
 And think on her, who thinks not for herself  
 Forgive him then, thou bustler in concerns  
 Of little worth, and idler in the best,  
 If, author of no mischief and some good,  
 He seeks his proper happiness by means  
 That may advance, but cannot hinder, thine.

*The Task, Book VI*

## THE MAN OF FASHION

To rise at noon, sit slipshod and undressed,  
 To read the news, or fiddle, as seems best,  
 Till half the world comes rattling at his door,  
 To fill the dull vacuity till four,  
 And, just when evening turns the blue vault gray,  
 To spend two hours in dressing for the day,  
 To make the sun a bauble without use,  
 Save for the fruits his heavenly beams produce,  
 Quite to forget, or deem it worth no thought  
 Who bids him shine, or if he shine or not,  
 Through mere necessity to close his eyes  
 Just when the larks and when the shepherds rise,  
 Is such a life, so tediously the same,  
 So void of all utility or aim,  
 That poor Jonquil, with almost every breath,  
 Sighs for his exit, vulgarly called death,  
 For he, with all his follies, has a mind  
 Not yet so blank, or fashionably blind,  
 But now and then perhaps a feeble ray  
 Of distant wisdom shoots across his way,  
 By which he reads, that life without a plan,  
 As useless as the moment it began,  
 Serves merely as a soil for discontent  
 To thrive in, an incumbrance ere half spent

*Hope*

## THE HYPOCHONDRIAC

VIRTUOUS and faithful HEBERDEN, whose skill  
 Attempts no task it cannot well fulfil,  
 Gives melancholy up to nature's care,  
 And sends the patient into purer air  
 Look where he comes—in this embowered alcove,  
 Stand close concealed, and see a statue move  
 Lips busy, and eyes fixed, foot falling slow,  
 Arms hanging idly down, hands clasped below,  
 Interpret to the marking eye distress,  
 Such as its symptoms can alone express.  
 That tongue is silent now, that silent tongue  
 Could argue once, could jest or join the song,  
 Could give advice, could censure or commend,  
 Or charm the sorrows of a drooping friend  
 Renounced alike its office and its sport,  
 Its brisker and its graver strains fall short,  
 Both fail beneath a fever's secret sway,  
 And like a summer brook are past away  
 This is a sight for Pity to peruse,  
 Till she resemble faintly what she views,  
 Till Sympathy contract a kindred pain,  
 Pierced with the woes that she laments in vain  
 This, of all maladies that man infest,  
 Claims most compassion, and receives the least  
 Job felt it, when he groaned beneath the rod  
 And the barbed arrows of a frowning God,  
 And such emollients as his friends could spare,  
 Friends such as his for modern Jobs prepare

*Retirement*

## A SCHOLAR

ALL are not such    I had a brother once—  
 Peace to the memory of a man of worth,  
 A man of letters, and of manners too,  
 Of manners sweet as virtue always wears  
 When gay good nature dresses her in smiles.  
 He graced a college, in which order yet  
 Was sacred, and was honoured, loved, and wept  
 By more than one, themselves conspicuous there  
 Some minds are tempered happily, and mixed  
 With such ingredients of good sense and taste  
 Of what is excellent in man, they thirst  
 With such a zeal to be what they approve,  
 That no restraints can circumscribe them more  
 Than they themselves by choice, for wisdom's sake  
 Nor can example hurt them, what they see  
 Of vice in others but enhancing more  
 The charms of virtue in their just esteem

*The Task, Book II*

## THE RECRUIT

Tis universal soldiership has stabbed  
The heart of merit in the meaner class.  
Arms, through the vanity and brainless rage  
Of those that bear them, in whatever cause,  
Seem most at variance with all moral good,  
And incompatible with serious thought.  
The clown, the chuld of nature, without guile,  
Blest with an infant's ignorance of all  
But his own simple pleasures, now and then  
A wrestling match, a foot race, or a fur,  
Is balloted, and trembles at the news  
Sheepish he doffs his hat, and mumbling swears  
A Bible oath to be whate'er they please,  
To do he knows not what The task performed,  
That instant he becomes the sergeant's care,  
His pupil, and his torment, and his jest  
His awkward gait, his introverted toes,  
Bent knees, round shoulders, and dejected looks,  
Procure him many a curse. By slow degrees,  
Unapt to learn, and formed of stubborn stuff,  
He yet by slow degrees puts off himself,  
Grows conscious of a change, and likes it well,  
He stands erect, his slouch becomes a walk,  
He steps right onward, martial in his air,  
His form, and movement, is as smart above  
As meal and larded locks can make him, wears  
His hat, or his plumed helmet, with a grace,  
And, his three years of heroship expired,  
Returns indignant to the slighted plough

He hates the field, in which no fife or drum  
 Attends him, drives his cattle to a march,  
 And sighs for the smart comrades he has left  
 'Twere well if his exterior change were all—  
 But with his clumsy port the wretch has lost  
 His ignorance and harmless manners too  
 To swear, to game, to drink, to show at home  
 By lewdness, idleness, and Sabbath breach,  
 The great proficiency he made abroad,  
 To astonish and to grieve his gazing friends,  
 To break some maiden's and his mother's heart,  
 To be a pest where he was useful once,  
 Are his sole aim, and all his glory now  
*The Task, Book IV*

## MUSICIANS AND THE FIDDLING PARSON

HARK ! how it floats upon the dewy air !  
 Oh what a dying, dying close was there !  
 'Tis harmony from yon sequestered bower,  
 Sweet harmony, that soothes the midnight hour !  
 Long ere the charioteer of day had run  
 His morning course, the enchantment was begun ,  
 And he shall gild yon mountain's height again,  
 Ere yet the pleasing toil becomes a pain  
 Is this the rugged path, the steep ascent  
 That Virtue points to? Can a life thus spent  
 Lead to the bliss she promises the wise,  
 Detach the soul from earth, and speed her to the  
skies?

Ye devotees to your adored employ,  
 Enthusiasts, drunk with an unreal joy,  
 Love makes the music of the best above,  
 Heaven's harmony is universal love :  
 And earthly sounds, though sweet and well combined  
 And luscious as soft opiates to the mind,  
 Leave vice and folly unsubdued behind.

Occidius is a pastor of renown ;  
 When he has prayed and preached the Sabbath down  
 With wine and cogit he concludes the day,  
 Quavering and semiquavering care away  
 The full concerto swells upon your ear ;  
 All elbows snake. Look in, and you would swear  
 The Babylonian tyrant with a nod  
 Had summoned them to serve his golden god ;  
 So well that thought the employment seems to suit,  
 Psalter and sackbut, dulcimer and fute.  
 On the 'Tis evangelical and pure ;  
 Observe each face, how sober and demure  
 Ecstasy sets her stamp on every mien,  
 Chins fallen, and not an eye-ball to be seen.  
 Still I insist, though music heretofore  
 Has charmed me much (not even Occidius more).  
 Love, joy, and peace make harmony more meet  
 For Sabbath evenings, and perhaps as sweet

*The Progress of Error.*

# SPORTSMAN AND HUNTING PRIESTS

GRAY dawn appears , the sportsman and his train,  
 Speckle the bosom of the distant plain ,  
 'Tis he, the Nimrod of the labouring lairs,—  
 Save that his scent is less acute than theirs,  
 For persevering chase, and headlong leaps,  
 True beagle as the staunchest hound he keeps  
 Charged with the folly of his life's mad scene,  
 He takes offence, and wonders what you mean ,  
 The joy, the danger, and the toil o'erpays—  
 'Tis exercise, and health, and length of days  
 Again impetuous to the field he flies ,  
 Leaps every fence but one, there falls and dies ,  
 Like a slain deer, the tumbrel brings him home,  
 Unmissed but by his dogs and by his groom

Ye clergy, while your orbit is your place,  
 Lights of the world, and stars of human race ,  
 But if eccentric ye forsake your sphere,  
 Prodigies ominous, and viewed with fear ,  
 The comet's baneful influence is a dream ,  
 Yours real and pernicious in the extreme  
 What then '—are appetites and lusts laid down  
 With the same ease the man puts on his gown ?  
 Will Avarice and Concupiscence give place,  
 Charmed by the sounds—"Your reverence," or "Your  
 grace"?

No But his own engagement binds him fast ,  
 Or, if it does not, brands him to the last  
 What atheists call him—a designing knave,  
 A mere church juggler, hypocrite, and slave.

Oh laugh, or mourn with me, the rueful jest,  
 A cassocked huntsman, and a fiddling priest !  
 He from Italian songsters takes his cue ,  
 Set Paul to music, he shall quote him too  
 He takes the field, the master of the pack  
 Cries—" Well done, Saint !" and claps him on the back  
 Is this the path of sanctity ? Is this  
 To stand a way mark in the road to bliss ?  
 Himself a wanderer from the narrow way,  
 His silly sheep, what wonder if they stray ?  
 Go, cast your orders at your Bishop's feet,  
 Send your dishonoured gown to Monmouth Street,  
 The sacred function, in your hands is made—  
 Sad sacrilege ! no function, but a trade !

*The Progress of Error*

## THE TRAVELLED YOUTH

FROM school to Cam or Isis, and thence home,  
 And thence with all convenient speed to Rome,  
 With reverend tutor, clad in habit lay,  
 To tease for cash, and quarrel with all day ,  
 With memorandum book for every town,  
 And every post, and where the chaise broke down ,  
 His stock, a few French phrases got by heart,  
 With much to learn, but nothing to impart,  
 The youth, obedient to his sire's commands,  
 Sets off a wanderer into foreign lands ,  
 Surprised at all they meet, the gosling pair,  
 With awkward gait, stretched neck, and silly stare,  
 Discover huge cathedrals built with stone,  
 And steeples towering high, much like our own,

But show peculiar light, by many a grin  
At Popish practices observed within

Ere long some bowing, smirking, smart Abbé  
Remarks two loiterers that have lost their way,  
And being always primed with *politesse*  
For men of their appearance and address,  
With much compassion undertakes the task  
To tell them more than they have wit to ask,  
Points to inscriptions wheresoe'er they tread,  
Such as, when legible, were never read,  
But being cankered now, and half worn out,  
Craze antiquarian brains with endless doubt,  
Some headless hero, or some Cæsar, shows—  
Defective only in his Roman nose,  
Exhibits elevations, drawings, plans,  
Models of Herculean pots and pans,  
And sells them medals, which, if neither rare  
Nor ancient, will be so, preserved with care.

Strange the recital ' from whatever cause  
His great improvement and new lights he draws,  
The squire, once bashful, is shamefaced no more,  
But teems with powers he never felt before,  
Whether increased momentum, and the force  
With which from clime to clime he sped his course,  
As axles sometimes kindle as they go,  
Chafed him, and brought dull nature to a glow,  
Or whether clearer skies and softer air,  
That make Italian flowers so sweet and fair,  
Freshening his lazy spirits as he ran,  
Unfolded genially and spread the man,  
Returning, he proclaims by many a grace,  
By shrugs and strange contortions of his face,  
How much a dunce that has been sent to roam  
Excels a dunce that has been kept at home

*The Progress of Error*

## RELIGIOUS DISCUSSIONS—SIR SMUG

- "Adieu," Vinona cries, ere yet he stir  
 The purple bumper trembling at his lips,  
 "Adieu to all morality ' if Grace  
 Make works a vain ingredient in the case  
 The Christian hope is—Waver, draw the cork—  
 If I mistake not—Blockhead ' with a fork !  
 Without good works, whatever some may boast,  
 Mere folly and delusion—Sir, your toast  
 My firm persuasion is, at least sometimes,  
 That Heaven will weigh man's virtues and his  
     crimes  
 With nice attention in a righteous scale,  
 And save, or damn, as these or those prevail  
 I plant my foot upon this ground of trust,  
 And silence every fear with—God is just  
 But if perchance on some dull drizzling day  
 A thought intrude, that says, or seems to say,  
 If thus the important cause is to be tried,  
 Suppose the beam should dip on the wrong side ?  
 I soon recover from these needless frights,  
 And, God is merciful !—sets all to rights.  
 Thus between justice, as my prime support,  
 And mercy, fled to as the last resort,  
 I glide and steal along with heaven in view,  
 And,—pardon me, the bottle stands with you '  
 "I never will believe," the Colonel cries,  
 "The sanguinary schemes that some devise,  
 Who make the good Creator, on their plan,  
 A being of less equity than man

If appetite, or what divines call lust,  
 Which men comply with, even because they must,  
 Be punish'd with perdition, who is pure?  
 Then theirs, no doubt, as well as mine, is sure.  
 If sentence of eternal pun belong  
 To every sudden slip and transient wrong,  
 Then Heaven enjoins the fallible and frail  
 A hopeless task, and damns them if they fail  
 My creed (whatever some creed makers mean  
 By Athanasian nonsense, or Nicene),  
 My creed is, he is safe that does his best,  
 And death's a doom sufficient for the rest."

"Right," says an Ensign, "and for aught I see,  
 Your faith and mine substantially agree,  
 The best of every man's performance here  
 Is to discharge the duties of his sphere.  
 A lawyer's dealings should be just and fair,  
 Honesty shines with great advantage there,  
 Fasting and prayer sit well upon a priest,  
 A decent caution and reserve at least,  
 A soldier's best is courage in the field,  
 With nothing here that wants to be concealed  
 Manly deportment, gallant, easy, gay,  
 As hand as liberal as the light of day  
 The soldier thus endowed, who never shrinks  
 Nor closets up his thought, whate'er he thinks,  
 Who scorns to do an injury by stealth,  
 Must go to heaven—and I must drink his health  
 Sir Smug," he cries (for lowest at the board,  
 Just made fifth chaplain of his patron lord,  
 His shoulders witnessing by many a shrug  
 How much his feelings suffered, sat Sir Smug),  
 "Your office is to winnow false from true,  
 Come, prophet, drink, and tell us, what think  
 you?"

Sighing and smiling as he takes his glass,  
 Which they that woo preferment rarely pass,  
 "Fallible man," the church bred youth replies,  
 "Is still found fallible, however wise,  
 And differing judgment serve but to declare,  
 That truth lies somewhere, if we knew but where  
 Of all it ever was my lot to read,  
 Of critics now alive, or long since dead,  
 The book of all the world that charmed me most  
 Was—well a day, the title page was lost,  
 The writ'er well remarks, a heart that knows  
 To take with gratitude what Heaven bestows,  
 With prudence always ready at our call,  
 To guide our use of it, is all in all  
 Doubtless it is.—To which, of my own store,  
 I superadd a few essentials more,  
 But these, excuse the liberty I take,  
 I waive just now, for conversation sake"—  
 "Spoke like an oracle!" they all exclaim,  
 And add Right Reverend to Smug's honoured name  
*Hcf*

## TALKERS OF VARIOUS CLASSES

DEBIT is such a scrupulous good man,—  
 Yes, you may catch him tripping if you can  
 He would not with a peremptory tone  
 Assert the nose upon his face his own,  
 With hesitation admirably slow,  
 He humbly hopes—presumes—it may be so  
 His evidence, if he were called by law  
 To swear to some enormity he saw,

For want of prominence and just relief,  
 Would hang an honest man, and save a thief  
 Through constant dread of giving truth offence,  
 He ties up all his hearers in suspense,  
 Knows what he knows, as if he knew it not,  
 What he remembers seems to have forgot,  
 His sole opinion, whatsoe'er befall,  
 Centering at last in having none at all  
 Yet though he tease and baulk your listening  
 ear,

He makes one useful point exceeding clear,  
 Howe'er ingenious on his darling theme  
 A sceptic in philosophy may seem,  
 Reduced to practice, his beloved rule  
 Would only prove him a consummate fool,  
 Useless in him alike both brain and speech,  
 Fate having placed all truth above his reach,  
 His ambiguities his total sum,  
 He might as well be blind and deaf and dumb

The emphatic speaker dearly loves to oppose  
 In contact inconvenient, nose to nose,  
 As if the gnomon on his neighbour's phiz,  
 Touched with the magnet, had attracted his  
 His whispered theme, dilated and at large,  
 Proves after all a wind-gun's airy charge,  
 An extract of his diary—no more,  
 A tasteless journal of the day before.  
 He walked abroad, o'ertaken in the rain  
 Called on a friend, drank tea, stepped home  
 again,

Resumed his purpose, had a world of talk  
 With one he stumbled on, and lost his walk  
 I interrupt him with a sudden bow,

"Adieu, dear Sir! lest you should lose it now"

I cannot talk with civet in the room,  
 A fine puss gentleman that's all perfume,  
 The sight's enough—no need to smell a beau—  
 Who thrusts his nose into a raree show?  
 His odoriferous attempts to please  
 Perhaps might prosper with a swarm of bees,  
 But we that make no honey, though we sting,  
 Poets, are sometimes apt to maul the thing  
 'Tis wrong to bring into a mixed resort  
 What makes some sick, and others *à la mort*,  
 An argument of cogence, we may say,  
 Why such a one should keep himself away

A graver coxcomb we may sometimes see,  
 Quite as absurd, though not so light as he  
 A shallow brain behind a serious mask,  
 An oracle within an empty cask,  
 The solemn fop, significant and budge,  
 A fool with judges, amongst fools a judge,  
 He says but little, and that little said  
 Owes all its weight, like loaded dice, to lead  
 His wit invites you by his looks to come,  
 But when you knock it never is at home  
 'Tis like a parcel sent you by the stage,  
 Some handsome present, as your hopes presage,  
 'Tis heavy, bulky, and bids fair to prove  
 An absent friend's fidelity and love,  
 But when unpacked, your disappointment groans  
 To find it stuffed with brickbats, earth, and  
 stones

Some men employ their health, an ugly trick,  
 In making known how oft they have been sick,  
 And give us in recitals of disease  
 A doctor's trouble, but without the fees,  
 Relate how many weeks they kept their bed,  
 How an emetic or cathartic sped,

Nothing is slightly touched, much less forgot,  
 Nose, ears, and eyes seem present on the spot  
 Now the distemper, spite of draught or pill,  
 Victorious seemed, and now the doctor's skill,  
 And now—alas for unforeseen mishaps !  
 They put on a damp nightcap and relapse,  
 They thought they must have died, they were so  
     bad,

Their peevish hearers almost wish they had  
     Some fretful tempers wince at every touch,  
 You always do too little or too much  
 You speak with life, in hopes to entertain,—  
 Your elevated voice goes through the brain,  
 You fall at once into a lower key,—  
 That's worse, the drone pipe of an humble bee  
 The southern sash admits too strong a light,  
 You rise and drop the curtain—now 'tis night,  
 He shakes with cold—you stir the fire and strive  
 To make a blaze—that's roasting him alive  
 Serve him with venison, and he chooses fish,  
 With sole—that's just the sort he would not wish  
 He takes what he at first profess'd to loathe,  
 And in due time feeds heartily on both,  
 Yet still o'erclouded with a constant frown,  
 He does not swallow, but he gulps it down  
 Your hope to please him vain on every plan,  
 Himself should work that wonder, if he can—  
 Alas ! his efforts double his distress,  
 He likes yours little, and his own still less,  
 Thus always teasing others, always teased,  
 His only pleasure is—to be displeased

I pity bashful men, who feel the pain  
 Of fancied scorn and undeserved disdain,  
 And bear the marks upon a blushing face  
 Of needless shame, and self imposed disgrace

Our sensibilities are so acute,  
 The fear of being silent makes us mute  
 We sometimes think we could a speech produce  
 Much to the purpose if our tongues were loose,  
 But, being tried, it dies upon the lip,  
 Faint as a chicken's note that has the pip  
 Our wasted oil unprofitably burns,  
 Like hidden lamps in old sepulchral urns.  
 Few Frenchmen of this evil have complain'd ,  
 It seems as if we Britons were ordain'd ,  
 By way of wholesome curb upon our pride,  
 To fear each other, fearing none beside.  
 The cause perhaps inquiry may descry,  
 Self searching with an introverted eye,  
 Conceal'd within an unsuspected part,  
 The vainest corner of our own vain heart  
 For ever aiming at the world's esteem,  
 Our self importance runs its own scheme ,  
 In other eyes our talents rarely shown,  
 Become at length so splendid in our own,  
 We dare not risk them into public view,  
 Lest they miscarry of what seems their due  
 True modesty is a discerning grace,  
 And only blushes in the proper place ,  
 But counterfeit is blind, and skulks through  
     fear,  
 Where 'tis a shame to be ashamed to appear  
 Humility the parent of the first,  
 The last by Vanity produced and nursed  
 The circle form'd, we sit in silent state,  
 Like figures drawn upon a dial plate ;  
 Yes ma'am and No ma'am, softly uttered, show  
 Every five minutes how the minutes go ,  
 Each individual suffering a constraint,  
 Poetry may, but colours cannot paint

As if in close committee on the sky,  
 Reports it hot or cold, or wet or dry,  
 And finds a changing clime a happy source  
 Of wise reflection, and well timed discourse  
 We next inquire, but softly and by stealth,  
 Like conservators of the public health,  
 Of epidemic throats, if such there are,  
 And coughs, and rheums, and phthisic, and catarrh  
 That theme exhausted, a wide chasm ensues,  
 Filled up at last with interesting news,  
 Who danced with whom, and who are like to wed,  
 And who is hanged, and who is brought to bed,  
 But fear to call a more important cause,  
 As if 'twere treason against English laws  
 The visit paid, with ecstasy we come,  
 As from a seven years' transportation, home,  
 And there resume an unembarrassed brow,  
 Recovering what we lost we know not how,  
 The faculties that seemed reduced to nought,  
 Expression and the privilege of thought

The reeking, roaring hero of the chase,  
 I give him over as a desperate case  
 Physicians write in hopes to work a cure,  
 Never, if honest ones, when death is sure,  
 And though the fox he follows may be tamed,  
 A mere fox follower never is reclaimed  
 Some farrier should prescribe his proper course,  
 Whose only fit companion is his horse,  
 Or if, deserving of a better doom,  
 The noble beast judge otherwise, his groom  
 Yet even the rogue that serves him, though he  
 stand,

To take his honour's orders, cap in hand,  
 Prefers his fellow-grooms, with much good sense,  
 Their skill a truth, his master's a pretence

If neither horse nor groom affect the squire,  
 Where can at last his jockeyship retire?  
 Oh to the club, the scene of savage joys,  
 The school of coarse good fellowship and noise,  
 There, in the sweet society of those  
 Whose friendship from his boyish years he chose,  
 Let him improve his talent if he can,  
 Till none but beasts acknowledge him a man

*Conversation*

## THE SCHOOLBOY

OH 'tis a sight to be with joy perused,  
 By all whom sentiment has not abused,

A father blest with an ingenuous son,  
 Father, and friend, and tutor, all in one  
 How!—turn again to tales long since forgot,  
 Æsop, and Phædrus, and the rest?—Why not?  
 He will not blush, that has a father's heart,  
 To take in childish plays a childish part,  
 But bends his sturdy back to any toy  
 That youth takes pleasure in, to please his boy  
 Then why resign into a stranger's hand  
 A task as much within your own command,  
 That God and Nature, and your interest too,  
 Seem with one voice to delegate to you?  
 Why hire a lodging in a house unknown  
 For one whose tenderest thoughts all hover round  
 your own?

This second weaning, needless as it is,  
 How does it lacerate both your heart and his !  
 The indented stick, that loses day by day  
 Notch after notch, till all are smoothed away,  
 Bears witness, long ere his dismissal come,  
 With what intense desire he wants his home  
 But though the joys he hopes beneath your roof  
 Bid fair enough to answer in the proof,  
 Harmless and safe, and natural, as they are,  
 A disappointment waits him even there  
 Arrived, he feels an unexpected change,  
 He blushes, hangs his head, is shy and strange ,  
 No longer takes, as once with fearless ease,  
 His favourite stand between his father's knees,  
 But seeks the corner of some distant seat,  
 And eyes the door, and watches a retreat ,  
 And least familiar where he should be most,  
 Feels all his happiest privileges lost  
 Alas, poor boy !—the natural effect  
 Of love by absence chilled into respect  
 Say, what accomplishments at school acquired,  
 Brings he, to sweeten fruits so undesired ?  
 Thou well deservest an alienated son,  
 Unless thy conscious heart acknowledge—none ,  
 None that, in thy domestic snug recess,  
 He had not made his own with more address,  
 Though some perhaps that shock thy feeling mind,  
 And better never learned, or left behind  
 Add too, that thus estranged, thou canst obtain  
 By no kind arts his confidence again ,  
 That here begins with most that long complaint  
 Of filial frankness lost, and love grown faint,  
 Which, oft neglected, in life's waning years  
 A parent pours into regardless ears

*Tirocinium*

## THE WISE TUTOR

ART thou a man professionally tied,  
 With all thy faculties elsewhere applied,  
 Too busy to intend a meaner care  
 Than how to enrich thyself, and next, thine heir,  
 Or art thou (as, though rich, perhaps thou art)  
 But poor in knowledge, having none to impart  
 Behold that figure, neat, though plainly clad,  
 His sprightly mingled with a shade of sad,  
 Not of a nimble tongue, though now and then  
 Heard to articulate like other men,  
 No jester, and yet lively in discourse,  
 His phrase well chosen, clear, and full of force,  
 And his address, if not quite French in ease,  
 Not English stiff, but frank, and formed to please,  
 Low in the world, because he scorns its arts,  
 A man of letters, manners, morals, parts,  
 Unpatronised, and therefore little known,  
 Wise for himself and his few friends alone—  
 In him thy well appointed proxy see,  
 Armed for a work too difficult for thee,  
 Prepared by taste, by learning, and true worth,  
 To form thy son, to strike his genius forth,  
 Beneath thy roof, beneath thine eye, to prove  
 The force of discipline when backed by love,  
 To double all thy pleasure in thy child,  
 His mind informed, his morals undefiled

*Tirocinium*

## THE INJUDICIOUS PARENT

BE it a weakness, it deserves some praise,  
 We love the play-place of our early days  
 The scene is touching, and the heart is stone  
 That feels not at that sight, and feels at none  
 The wall on which we tried our graving skill,  
 The very name we carved subsisting still,  
 The bench on which we sat while deep employed,  
 Though mangled, hacked, and hewed, not yet  
 destroyed

The little ones, unbuttoned, glowing hot,  
 Playing our games, and on the very spot,  
 As happy as we once, to kneel and draw  
 The chalky ring, and knuckle down at taw,  
 To pitch the ball into the grounded hat,  
 Or drive it devious with a dexterous pat,  
 The pleasing spectacle at once excites  
 Such recollection of our own delights,  
 That, viewing it, we seem almost to obtain  
 Our innocent sweet simple years again  
 This fond attachment to the well-known place  
 Whence first we started into life's long race,  
 Maintains its hold with such unfailing sway,  
 We feel it e'en in age, and at our latest day  
 Hark ! how the sire of chits, whose future share  
 Of classic food begins to be his care,  
 With his own likeness placed on either knee,  
 Indulges all a father's heartfelt glee,  
 And tells them, as he strokes their silver locks,  
 That they must soon learn Latin, and to box

Then turning, he regales his listening wife  
 With all the adventures of his early life,  
 His skill in coachmanship, or driving chaise,  
 In bilking taverns bills and spouting plays,  
 What shifts he used, detected in a scrape,  
 How he was flogged, or had the luck to escape,  
 What sums he lost at play, and how he sold  
 Watch, seals, and all—till all his pranks are told  
 Retracing thus his *frolics* ('tis a name  
 That palliates deeds of folly and of shame),  
 He gives the local bias all its sway,  
 Resolves that where he played his sons shall play,  
 And destines their bright genius to be shown  
 Just in the scene where he displayed his own.  
 The meek and bashful boy will soon be taught  
 To be as bold and forward as he ought,  
 The rude will scuffle through with ease enough,  
 Great schools suit best the sturdy and the rough  
 Ah, happy designation, prudent choice,  
 The event is sure, expect it, and rejoice!  
 Soon see your wish fulfilled in either child,  
 The pert made perter, and the tame made wild

*Tirocinium*

## RECOLLECTIONS OF CHILDHOOD

THERE is in souls a sympathy with sounds,  
 And as the mind is pitch'd the ear is pleas'd  
 With melting airs or martial, brisk or grave.  
 Some chord in unison with what we hear  
 Is touch'd within us, and the heart replies.

How soft the music of those village bells  
 Falling at intervals upon the ear  
 In cadence sweet ! now dying all away,  
 Now pealing loud again and louder still,  
 Clear and sonorous as the gale comes on  
 With easy force it opens all the cells  
 Where memory slept    Wherever I have heard  
 A kindred melody, the scene recurs,  
 And with it all its pleasures and its pains  
 Such comprehensive views the spirit takes,  
 That in a few short moments I retrace  
 (As in a map the voyager his course)  
 The windings of my way through many years  
 Short as in retrospect the journey seems,  
 It seemed not always short , the rugged path,  
 And prospect oft so dreary and forlorn,  
 Moved many a sigh at its disheartening length  
 Yet feeling present evils, while the past  
 Faintly impress the mind, or not at all,  
 How readily we wish time spent revoked,  
 That we might try the ground again, where once  
 (Through inexperience as we now perceive)  
 We missed that happiness we might have found !  
 Some friend is gone, perhaps his son's best friend,  
 A father, whose authority, in show  
 When most severe, and mustering all its force,  
 Was but the graver countenance of love ,  
 Whose favour, like the clouds of spring, might lower,  
 And utter now and then an awful voice,  
 But had a blessing in its darkest frown,  
 Threatening at once and nourishing the plant.  
 We loved, but not enough, the gentle hand  
 That reared us    At a thoughtless age allured  
 By every gilded folly, we renounced  
 His sheltering side, and wilfully forewent

That converse which we now in vain regret.  
 How gladly would the man recall to life  
 The boy's neglected sire ! a mother too,  
 That softer friend, perhaps more gladly still,  
 Might he demand them at the gates of death.  
 Sorrow has, since they went, subdued and tamed  
 The playful humour, he could now endure  
 (Himself grown sober in the vale of tears)  
 And feel a parent's presence no restraint  
 But not to understand a treasure's worth  
 Till time has stolen away the slighted good,  
 Is cause of half the poverty we feel,  
 And makes the world the wilderness it is.  
 The few that pray at all pray oft amiss,  
 And, seeking grace to improve the prize they hold,  
 Would urge a wiser suit than asking more.

*The Task, Book VI*

POEMS ON RELIGIOUS  
SUBJECTS



## CONVERSION

If ever thou hast felt another's pain,  
If ever when he sigh'd, hast sigh'd again,  
If ever on thy eyelid stood a tear  
That pity had engender'd, drop one here.  
This man was happy, had the world's good word,  
And with it every joy it can afford,  
Friendship and love seem'd tenderly at strife,  
Which most should sweeten his untroubled life,  
Politely learn'd, and of a gentle race,  
Good breeding and good sense gave all a grace,  
And whether at the toilet of the fair  
He laughed and trifled, made him welcome there,  
Or if in masculine debate he shared,  
Ensured him mute attention and regard  
Alas, how changed ! Expressive of his mind,  
His eyes are sunk, arms folded, head reclined,  
Those awful syllables—hell, death, and sin,  
Though whispered, plainly tell what works within,  
That conscience there performs her proper part,  
And writes a doomsday sentence on his heart,  
Forsaking, and forsaken of all friends,  
He now perceives where earthly pleasure ends,  
Hard task for one who lately knew no care,  
And harder still is learnt beneath despair

His hours no longer pass unmark'd away,  
 A dark importance saddens every day,  
 He hears the notice of the clock perplex'd,  
 And cries, "Perhaps eternity strikes next!"  
 Sweet music is no longer music here,  
 And laughter sounds like madness in his ear,  
 His grief the world of all her power disarms,  
 Wine has no taste, and beauty has no charms  
 God's holy word, once trivial in his view,  
 Now by the voice of his experience true,  
 Seems, as it is, the fountain whence alone  
 Must spring that hope he pants to make his own.

Now let the bright reverse be known abroad,  
 Say man's a worm, and power belongs to God  
 As when a felon whom his country's laws  
 Have justly doom'd for some atrocious cause,  
 Expects in darkness and heart chilling fears,  
 The shameful close of all his mis spent years,  
 If chance, on heavy pinions slowly borne,  
 A tempest usher in the dreaded morn,  
 Upon his dungeon walls the lightnings play,  
 The thunder seems to summon him away,  
 The warder at the door his key applies,  
 Shoots back the bolt, and all his courage dies  
 If then, just then, all thoughts of mercy lost,  
 When hope, long lingering, at last yields the  
 ghost,

The sound of pardon pierce his startled ear,  
 He drops at once his fetters and his fear,  
 A transport glows in all he looks and speaks,  
 And the first thankful tears bedew his cheeks  
 Joy, far superior joy, that much outweighs  
 The comfort of a few poor added days,  
 Invades, possesses, and o'erwhelms the soul  
 Of him whom Hope has with a touch made whole,

'Tis heaven, all heaven descending on the wings  
 Of the glad legions of the King of kings ,  
 'Tis more—'tis God diffused through every part,  
 'Tis God himself triumphant in his heart.  
 O, welcome now the sun's once hated light,  
 His noonday beams were never half so bright  
 Not hundred minds alone are called to employ  
 Their hours, their days, in listening to his joy ,  
 Unconscious nature, all that he surveys,  
 Rocks, groves, and streams, must join him in his praise  
*Hope*

## GOD IN NATURE

THE Lord of all, Himself through all diffused,  
 Sustains and is the life of all that lives  
 Nature is but a name for an effect  
 Whose cause is God    He feeds the secret fire  
 By which the mighty process is maintain'd,  
 Who sleeps not, is not weary , in whose sight  
 Slow circling ages are as transient days ,  
 Whose work is without labour , whose designs  
 No flaw deforms, no difficulty thwarts ,  
 And whose beneficence no charge exhausts.  
 Him blind antiquity profaned, not served,  
 With self taught rites, and under various names,  
 Female and male, Pomona, Pales, Pan,  
 And Flora and Vertumnus , peopling earth  
 With tutelary goddesses and gods  
 That were not, and commending as they would  
 To each some province, garden, field, or grove

But all are under One. One Spirit—His  
 Who wore the plaited thorns with bleeding brows—  
 Rules universal nature. Not a flower  
 But shows some touch in freckle, streak, or stain,  
 Of His unrivall'd pencil He inspires  
 Their balmy odours and imparts their hues,  
 And bathes their eyes with nectar, and includes,  
 In grains as countless as the seaside sands,  
 The forms with which He sprinkles all the earth.  
 Happy who walks with him ! whom what he finds  
 Of flavour or of scent in fruit or flower,  
 Or what he views of beautiful or grand  
 In nature, from the broad, majestic oak  
 To the green blade that twinkles in the sun,  
 Prompts with remembrance of a present God  
 His presence, who made all so fair, perceived,  
 Makes all still fairer As with Him no scene  
 Is dreary, so with Him all seasons please  
 Though winter had been none, had man been true,  
 And earth be punish'd for its tenant's sake,  
 Yet not in vengeance, as this smiling sky,  
 So soon succeeding such an angry night,  
 And these dissolving snows, and this clear stream  
 Recovering fast its liquid music, prove

*The Task, Book VI*

## DIVINE REVIVAL IN NATURE

ALL we behold is miracle, but seen  
 So duly, all is miracle in vain  
 Where now the vital energy that moved,  
 While summer was, the pure and subtle lymph  
 Through the imperceptible meandering veins  
 Of leaf and flower? It sleeps, and the icy touch  
 Of unprolific winter has impress'd  
 A cold stagnation on the intestine tide  
 But let the months go round, a few short months,  
 And all shall be restored These naked shoots,  
 Barren as lances, among which the wind  
 Makes wintry music, sighing as it goes,  
 Shall put their graceful foliage on again,  
 And more aspiring, and with ampler spread,  
 Shall boast new charms, and more than they have  
 lost

Then, each in its peculiar honours clad,  
 Shall publish, even to the distant eye,  
 Its family and tribe Laburnum rich  
 In streaming gold, syringa ivory pure,  
 The scentless and the scented rose, this red  
 And of an humbler growth, the other tall,  
 And throwing up into the darkest gloom  
 Of neighbouring cypress, or more sable yew,  
 Her silver globes, light as the foamy surf  
 That the wind severs from the broken wave,  
 The lilac various in array, now white,  
 Now sanguine, and her beauteous head now set  
 With purple spikes pyramidal, as if

Studious of ornament, yet unresolved  
Which hue she most approved, she chose them all

These have been, and these shall be in their day  
And all this uniform uncoloured scene  
Shall be dismantled of its fleecy load,  
And flush into variety again  
From dearth to plenty, and from death to life,  
Is Nature's progress when she lectures man  
In heavenly truth, evincing, as she makes  
The grand transition, that there lives and works  
A soul in all things, and that soul is God  
The beauties of the wilderness are His,  
That make so gay the solitary place  
Where no eye sees them And the fairer forms,  
That cultivation glories in, are His.  
He sets the bright procession on its way,  
And marshals all the order of the year,  
He marks the bounds which winter may not pass,  
And blunts His pointed fury, in its case,  
Russet and rude, folds up the tender germ  
Uninjured, with inimitable art,  
And, ere one flowery season fades and dies,  
Designs the blooming wonders of the next

*The Task*, Book VI

## THE JOURNEY TO EMMAUS

It happened on a solemn eventide,  
Soon after He that was our surety died,  
Two bosom friends, each pensively inclined,  
The scene of all those sorrows left behind,

Sought their own village, busied as they went  
 In musings worthy of the great event  
 They spoke of him they loved, of him whose life,  
 Though blameless, had incurred perpetual strife,  
 Whose deeds had left, in spite of hostile arts,  
 A deep memorial graven on their hearts  
 The recollection, like a vein of ore,  
 The farther traced, enriched them still the more,  
 They thought him, and they justly thought him, one  
 Sent to do more than he appeared to have done,  
 To exalt a people and to place them high  
 Above all else, and wondered he should die  
 Ere yet they brought their journey to an end,  
 A stranger joined them, courteous as a friend,  
 And asked them with a kind engaging air  
 What their affliction was, and begged a share  
 Informed, he gathered up the broken thread,  
 And, truth and wisdom gracing all he said,  
 Explained, illustrated and searched so well  
 The tender theme, on which they chose to dwell,  
 That reaching home, "The night," they said, "is near,  
 We must not now be parted, sojourn here."  
 The new acquaintance soon became a guest,  
 And, made so welcome at their simple feast,  
 He blessed the bread, but vanished at the word,  
 And left them both exclaiming, "'Twas the Lord !  
 Did not our hearts feel all he deigned to say,  
 Did they not burn within us by the way ?'

*Conversation*

## RELIGION IN RURAL LIFE

HACKNEY'D in business, wearied at that oar,  
 Which thousands, once fast chain'd to, quit no more,  
 But which, when life at ebb runs weak and low,  
 All wish, or seem to wish, they could forego,  
 The statesman, lawyer, merchant, man of trade,  
 Pants for the refuge of some rural shade,  
 Where all his long anxieties forgot,  
 Amid the charms of a sequester'd spot,  
 Or recollected only to gild o'er  
 And add a smile to what was sweet before,  
 He may possess the joys he thinks he sees,  
 Lay his old age upon the lap of ease,  
 Improve the remnant of his wasted span,  
 And, having lived a trifier, die a man  
 Thus conscience pleads her cause within the breast,  
 Though long rebell'd against, not yet suppress'd,  
 And calls a creature form'd for God alone,  
 For Heaven's high purposes and not his own,  
 Calls him away from selfish ends and aims,  
 From what debilitates and what inflames,  
 From cities humming with a restless crowd,  
 Sordid as active, ignorant as loud,  
 Whose highest praise is that they live in vain,  
 The dupes of pleasure, or the slaves of gain,  
 Where works of man are cluster'd close around  
 And works of God are hardly to be found,  
 To regions where, in spite of sin and woe,  
 Traces of Eden are still seen below,  
 Where mountain, river, forest, field, and grove  
 Remind him of his Maker's power and love

'Tis well if look'd for at so late a day,  
 In the last scene of such a senseless play,  
 True wisdom will attend his feeble call,  
 And grace his act in ere the curtain fall  
 Souls that have long despised their heavenly  
 birth,

Their wishes all impregnated with earth,  
 For three core years employ'd with ceaseless care,  
 In catching smoke and feeding upon air,  
 Conversant only with the way of men,  
 Rarely redeem the short remaining ten  
 Inveterate habits choke the unfruitful heart,  
 Their fibres penetrate its tenderest part,  
 And draining its nutritious powers to feed  
 Their noxious growth, starve every better seed

Happy if full of days—but happier far,  
 If ere we yet discern life's evening star,  
 Sick of the service of a world that feels  
 Its patient drudger with dry chaff and weeds,  
 We can escape from custom's idiot sway,  
 To serve the Sovereign we were born to obey  
 Then sweet to muse upon His all display'd  
 (Infinite all) in all that He has made !  
 To trace in Nature's most minute design  
 The signature and stamp of power divine,  
 Contrivance intricate express'd with ease,  
 Where unassisted sight no beauty sees,  
 The shapely limb and lubricated joint,  
 Within the small dimensions of a point,  
 Muscle and nerve miraculously spun,  
 His mighty word who speaks and it is done,  
 The Invisible in things scarce seen reveal'd,  
 To whom an atom is an ample field,  
 To wonder at a thousand insect forms,  
 The hatch'd, and those resuscitated worms,

New life ordain'd and brighter scenes to share,  
 Once prone on earth, now buoyant upon air,  
 Whose shape would make them, had they bulk and  
     size,

More hideous foes than fancy can devise ;  
 With helmet heads, and dragon scales adorned,  
 The mighty myriads, now securely scorned,  
 Would mock the majesty of man's high birth,  
 Despise his bulwarks, and unpeople earth  
 Then with a glance of fancy to survey,  
 Far as the faculty can stretch away,  
 Ten thousand rivers poured at his command  
 From urns, that never fail, through every land ,  
 These like a deluge with impetuous force,  
 Those winding modestly a silent course ,  
 The cloud-surmounting Alps, the fruitful vales ,  
 Seas, on which every nation spreads her sails ,  
 The sun, a world whence other worlds drink light,  
 The crescent moon, the diadem of night ,  
 Stars countless, each in his appointed place,  
 Fast anchored in the deep abyss of space—  
 At such a sight to catch the poet's flame,  
 And with a rapture like his own exclaim,  
 " These are Thy glorious works, Thou Source of good,  
 How dimly seen, how faintly understood '  
 Thine, and upheld by Thy paternal care,  
 This universal frame, thus wondrous fair ,  
 Thy power divine, and bounty beyond thought,  
 Adored and praised in all that Thou hast wrought  
 Absorbed in that immensity I see,  
 I shrink abased, and yet aspire to Thee ,  
 Instruct me, guide me to that heavenly day  
 Thy words, more clearly than Thy works, display,  
 That, while Thy truths my grosser thoughts refine,  
 I may resemble Thee, and call Thee mine."

*Retirement*

## THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS

Sweet is the harp of prophecy ; too sweet  
 Not to be wrang'd by a more mortal touch ,  
 Nor can the wonders it records be sung  
 To meaner music, and not suffer loss  
 For when a poet, or when one like me,  
 Happy to rove among poetic flowers,  
 Though poor in skill to rear them, lights at last  
 On some fair theme, some theme divinely fair,  
 Such is the impulse and the spur he feels  
 To give it praise proportion'd to its worth,  
 That not to attempt it, arduous as he deems  
 The labour, were a task more arduous still

Oh scenes surpassing fable, and yet true,  
 Scenes of accomplish'd bliss ! which who can see  
 Though but in distant prospect, and not feel  
 His soul refresh'd with foretaste of the joy ?  
 Rivers of gladness water all the earth,  
 And clothe all climes with beauty , the reproach  
 Of barrenness is past The fruitful field  
 Laughs with abundance and the land once lean,  
 Or fertile only in its own disgrace,  
 Exults to see its thistly curse repeal'd  
 The various seasons woven into one,  
 And that one season an eternal spring,  
 The garden feels no blight, and needs no fence,  
 For there is none to covet, all are full  
 The lion, and the libbard, and the bear  
 Graze with the fearless flocks , all bask at noon  
 Together, or all gambol in the shade  
 Of the same grove, and drink one common stream

Antipathies are none. No foe to man  
 Lurks in the serpent now the mother sees,  
 And smiles to see, her infant's playful hand  
 Stretch'd forth to dally with the crested worm,  
 To stroke his azure neck, or to receive  
 The lambent homage of his arrowy tongue.  
 All creatures worship man, and all mankind  
 One Lord, one Father Error has no place  
 That creeping pestilence is driven away  
 The breath of Heaven has chased it In the heart  
 No passion touches a discordant string,  
 But all is harmony and love. Disease  
 Is not, the pure and uncontaminate blood  
 Holds its due course, nor fears the frost of age.  
 One song employs all nations, and all cry,  
 " Worthy the Lamb, for He was slain for us !"  
 The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks  
 Shout to each other, and the mountain tops  
 From distant mountains catch the flying joy,  
 Till, nation after nation, taught the strain,  
 Earth rolls the rapturous hosanna round  
 Behold the measure of the promise fill'd ,  
 See Salem built, the labour of a God !  
 Bright as a sun the sacred city shines ,  
 All kingdoms and all princes of the earth  
 Flock to that light , the glory of all lands  
 Flows into her , unbounded is her joy,  
 And endless her increase. Thy rams are there,  
 Nebaoth, and the flocks of Kedar there ,  
 The looms of Ormus, and the mines of Ind,  
 And Saba's spicy groves, pay tribute there  
 Praise is in all her gates upon her walls,  
 And in her streets, and in her spacious courts,  
 Is heard salvation. Eastern Jeva there  
 Kneels with the native of the farthest west,

And Ethiopia spreads abroad the land  
 And worships. Her report has travell'd forth  
 Into all lands. From every clime they come  
 To see thy beauty, and to share thy joy,  
 O Zion ! an assembly such as earth  
 Saw never, such as heaven stoops down to see

Thus heavenward all things tend. For all were once  
 Perfect, and all must be at length restored  
 So God has greatly purposed, who would else  
 In His dishonour'd world Himself endure  
 Dishonour, and be wrong'd without redress  
 Haste then, and wheel away a shatter'd world,  
 Ye slow revolving seasons ! we would see  
 (A sight to which our eyes are strangers yet)  
 A world that does not dread and hate His laws  
 And suffer for its crime, would learn how far  
 The creature is that God pronounces good,  
 How pleasant in itself what pleases Him.  
 Here every drop of honey hides a sting,  
 Worms wind themselves into our sweetest flowers,  
 And even the joy that haply some poor heart  
 Derives from Heaven, pure as the fountain is  
 Is sullied in the stream, taking a taint  
 From touch of human lips, at best impure.  
 Oh for a world in principle as chaste  
 As this is gross and selfish ! over which  
 Custom and prejudice shall bear no sway,  
 That govern all things here, shouldering aside  
 The meek and modest Truth, and forcing her  
 To seek a refuge from the tongue of strife  
 In nooks obscure, far from the ways of men,  
 Where violence shall never lift the sword,  
 Nor cunning justify the proud man's wrong,  
 Leaving the poor no remedy but tears,  
 Where he that fills an office shall esteem

The occasion it presents of doing good  
 More than the perquisite , where law shall speak  
 Seldom, and never but as wisdom prompts  
 And equity , not jealous more to guard  
 A worthless form than to decide aright ,  
 Where fashion shall not sanctify abuse,  
 Nor smooth good breeding (supplemental grace)  
 With lean performance ape the work of love.

Come then, and added to Thy many crowns,  
 Receive yet one, the crown of all the earth,  
 Thou who alone art worthy ! It was Thine  
 By ancient covenant ere nature's birth,  
 And Thou hast made it Thine by purchase since,  
 And overpaid its value with Thy blood  
 Thy saints proclaim Thee King , and in their hearts  
 Thy title is engraven with a pen  
 Dipped in the fountain of eternal love  
 Thy saints proclaim Thee King , and Thy delay  
 Gives courage to their foes, who, could they see  
 The dawn of Thy last advent, long-desired,  
 Would creep into the bowels of the hills,  
 And flee for safety to the falling rocks.  
 The very spirit of the world is tired  
 Of its own taunting question, asked so long,  
 " Where is the promise of your Lord's approach ?"  
*The Task, Book VI*

## WALKING WITH GOD

*Gal. i. 24*

Out for a closer walk with God,  
 A calm and heavenly frame  
 A light to shine upon the road  
 That leads me to the Lamb !

Where is the blessedness I knew  
 When first I saw the Lord ?  
 Where is the soul refreshing view  
 Of Jesus and His word ?

What peaceful hours I once enjoyed !  
 How sweet their memory still !  
 But they have left an aching void,  
 The world can never fill.

Return, O holy Dove, return !  
 Sweet messenger of rest !  
 I hate the sins that made Thee mourn,  
 And drove Thee from my breast

The dearest idol I have known,  
 What'er that idol be,  
 Help me to tear it from Thy throne,  
 And worship only Thee.

So shall my walk be close with God,  
 Calm and serene my frame,  
 So purer light shall mark the road  
 That leads me to the Lamb

## JEHOVAH-NISSI,

THE LORD MY BANNER *Exod xvii 15*

BY whom was David taught  
 To aim the deadly blow,  
 When he Goliath fought,  
 And laid the Gittite low?  
 Nor sword nor spear the stripling took,  
 But chose a pebble from the brook  
 'Twas Israel's God and King  
 Who sent him to the fight,  
 Who gave him strength to sling,  
 And skill to aim aright.  
 Ye feeble sunts, your strength endures,  
 Because young David's God is yours.  
 Who ordered Gideon forth  
 To storm the invaders' camp,  
 With arms of little worth,  
 A pitcher and a lamp?  
 The trumpets made his coming known,  
 And all the host was overthrown  
 Oh! I have seen the day,  
 When with a single word,  
 God helping me to say,  
 "My trust is in the Lord,"  
 My soul hath quelled a thousand foes,  
 Fearless of all that could oppose  
 But unbelief, self will,  
 Self righteousness, and pride,  
 How often do they steal  
 My weapon from my side!  
 Yet David's Lord, and Gideon's friend,  
 Will help His servant to the end

## THE CONTRITE HEART

Thou Lord will happiness divine  
 On contrite hearts bestow ;  
 Then tell me, gracious God, is mine  
 A contrite heart, or no ?

I hear, but seem to hear in vain,  
 Inensible as steel ,  
 If aught is felt, 'tis only pain,  
 To find I cannot feel

I sometimes think myself inclined  
 To love thee, if I could ,  
 But often feel another mind,  
 Averse to all that's good

My best desires are faint and few,  
 I fain would strive for more ,  
 But when I cry, " My strength renew "  
 Seem weaker than before

Thy saints are comforted, I know,  
 And love Thy house of prayer ,  
 I therefore go where others go,  
 But find no comfort there

Oh I make this heart rejoice or ache  
 Decide this doubt for me ,  
 And if it be not broken, break —  
 And heal it, if it be

## LOVEST THOU ME?

HARK, my soul ! it is the Lord ,  
 'Tis thy Saviour, hear His word ,  
 Jesus speaks, and speaks to thee,  
 " Say, poor sinner, lovest thou me ?

" I delivered thee when bound,  
 And when bleeding, healed thy wound ,  
 Sought thee wandering, set thee right ,  
 Turned thy darkness into light

" Can a woman's tender care  
 Cease towards the child she bare ?  
 Yes, she may forgetful be,  
 Yet will I remember thee

' Mine is an unchanging love,  
 Higher than the heights above,  
 Deeper than the depths beneath,  
 Free and faithful, strong as death

" Thou shalt see my glory soon,  
 When the work of grace is done ,  
 Partner of my throne shalt be,—  
 Say, poor sinner, lovest thou me ?"

Lord, it is my chief complaint,  
 That my love is weak and faint ,  
 Yet I love Thee and adore,—  
 Oh for grace to love Thee more !

## RETIREMENT

FAR from the world O Lord, I flee,  
 From strife and tumult far :  
 From scenes where Satan wages still  
 His most successful war

The calm retreat, the silent shade,  
 With prayer and praise agree,  
 And seem by Thy sweet bounty made  
 For those who follow Thee

There, if Thy Spirit touch the soul,  
 And grace her mean abode,  
 Oh ! with what peace, and joy, and love,  
 She communes with her God !

There like the nightingale she pours  
 Her solitary lays,  
 Nor asks a witness of her song,  
 Nor thirsts for human praise

Author and guardian of my life,  
 Sweet source of light divine,  
 And—all harmonious names in one—  
 My Saviour ! Thou art mine !

What thanks I owe Thee, and what love,  
 A boundless, endless store,  
 Shall echo through the realms above,  
 When time shall be no more

## GRACE AND PROVIDENCE

ALMIGHTY KING ! whose wondrous hand  
 Supports the weight of sea and land ,  
 Whose grace is such a boundless store,  
 No heart shall break that sighs for more ,

Thy providence supplies my food,  
 And 'tis Thy blessing makes it good ,  
 My soul is nourished by Thy word  
 Let soul and body praise the Lord !

My streams of outward comfort came  
 From Him who built this earthly frame ,  
 Whate'er I want His bounty gives,  
 By whom my soul for ever lives

Either His hand preserves from pain,  
 Or, if I feel it, heals again ,  
 From Satan's malice shields my breast,  
 Or overrules it for the best.

Forgive the song that falls so low  
 Beneath the gratitude I owe !  
 It means Thy praise, however poor,  
 An angel's song can do no more

## THE WAITING SOUL

BREATHE from the gentle south, O Lord,  
 And cheer me from the north,  
 Blow on the treasures of Thy word,  
 And call the spices forth !

I wish, Thou know'st to be resigned,  
 And wait with patient hope,  
 But hope delayed fatigues the mind,  
 And drinks the spirit up

Help me to reach the distant goal,  
 Confirm my feeble knee,  
 Pity the sickness of a soul  
 That faints for love of Thee !

Cold as I feel this heart of mine,  
 Yet, since I feel it so,  
 It yields some hope of life divine  
 Within, however low

I seem for-saken and alone,  
 I hear the lion roar,  
 And every door is shut but one,  
 And that is Mercy's door

There, till the dear Deliverer come,  
 I'll wait with humble prayer,  
 And when He calls His exile home,  
 The Lord shall find him there.

LIGHT SHINING OUT OF DARKNESS <sup>1</sup>

God moves in a mysterious way  
 His wonders to perform ,  
 He plants His footsteps in the sea,  
 And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines  
 Of never-failing skill,  
 He treasures up His bright designs,  
 And works His sovereign will

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,  
 The clouds ye so much dread  
 Are big with mercy, and shall break  
 In blessings on your head

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
 But trust Him for His grace ,  
 Behind a frowning providence  
 He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,  
 Unfolding every hour ,  
 The bud may have a bitter taste,  
 But sweet will be the flower

Blind unbelief is sure to err,  
 And scan His work in vain  
 God is His own interpreter,  
 And He will make it plain

<sup>1</sup> Composed June 1773, on the eve of Cowper's second attack of insanity

## HUMAN FRAILTY

Weak and irresolute is man,  
 The purpose of to day,  
 Woven with pains into his plan,  
 To morrow tends away

The bow well bent and smart the string,  
 Vice seems already slain,  
 But jackson rudely snaps the string,  
 And it revives again

Some foe to his upright intent  
 Finds out his weaker part,  
 Virtue engages his assent,  
 But pleasure wins his heart

'Tis here the folly of the wise  
 Through all his art we view,  
 And while his tongue the charge denies,  
 His conscience owns it true

Bound on a voyage of awful length  
 And dangers little known,  
 A stranger to superior strength,  
 Man vainly trusts his own

But oars alone can ne'er prevail  
 To reach the distant coast,  
 The breath of heaven must swell the sail,  
 Or all the toil is lost

## STANZAS

SUBJOINED TO THE YEARLY BILL OF MORTALITY OF THE  
PARISH OF ALL SAINTS, NORTHAMPTON,

FOR THE YEAR 1787

*Pallida Mors æquo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas  
Regumque turres.*—HORACE

Pale Death with equal foot strikes wide the door  
Of royl halls and hovels of the poor

WHILE thirteen moons saw smoothly run  
The Nen's barge laden wave,  
All these, life's rambling journey done,  
Have found their home, the grave

Was man (frail always) made more frail  
Than in foregoing years?  
Did famine or did plague prevail,  
That so much death appears?

No these were vigorous as their sires,  
Nor plague nor famine came,  
Thus annual tribute Death requires,  
And never waives his claim

Like crowded forest trees we stand,  
And some are marked to fall,  
The axe will smite at God's command,  
And soon shall smite us all

Green as the bry tree, ever green,  
With its new foliage on,  
The gay, the thoughtless, have I seen,  
I passed—and they were gone.



None, accustomed to the sound,  
Wakes the sooner for his cry

So your verse man I, and clerk,  
Yearly in my song proclaim  
Death at hand—; ourselves his mark—  
And the foe's unerring aim

Duly at my time I come,  
Publishing to all aloud—  
Soon the grave must be your home,  
And your only suit a shroud

But the monitory strain,  
Oft repeated in your ears,  
Seems to sound too much in vain,  
Wins no notice, wakes no fears

Can a truth, by all confessed  
Of such magnitude and weight,  
Grow, by being oft expressed,  
Trivial as a parrot's prate?

Pleasure's call attention wins,  
Hear it often as we may,  
New as ever seem our sins,  
Though committed every day

Death and Judgment, Heaven and Hell—  
These alone, so often heard,  
No more move us than the bell  
When some stranger is interred

Oh then, ere the turf or tomb  
Cover us from every eye,  
Spirit of instruction ! come  
Make us learn that we must die



And ardour in the Christian race  
A hypocrite's pretence?

Who trample order, and the day  
Which God asserts His own  
Dishonour with unhallowed play,  
And worship Chance alone?

If scorn of God's commands, impressed  
On word and deed, imply  
The better part of man unblessed  
With life that cannot die,

Such want it and that want, uncured  
Till man resigns his breath,  
Speaks him a criminal, assured  
Of everlasting death

Sad period to a pleasant course !  
Yet so will God repay  
Sabbaths profaned without remorse,  
And Mercy cast away

POEMS HUMOROUS AND  
PLAYFUL



## THE DIVERTING HISTORY OF JOHN GILPIN

SHOWING HOW HE WENT FARTHER THAN HE  
INTENDED AND CAME SAFE HOME AGAIN

JOHN GILPIN was a citizen  
Of credit and renown,  
A true hand cap'tun else was he  
Of famous London town

John Gilpin's spouse said to her dear,  
"Though wedded we have been  
These twice ten tedious years, yet we  
No holiday have seen

"To morrow is our wedding-day,  
And we will then repair  
Unto the Bell at Edmonton,  
All in a chaise and pair

"My sister, and my sister's child,  
Myself, and children three,  
Will fill the chaise, so you must ride  
On horseback after we "

He soon replied, "I do admire  
Of womankind but one,  
And you are she, my dearest dear,  
Therefore it shall be done

“ I am a linen-draper bold,  
 As all the world doth know,  
 And my good friend the calender  
 Will lend his horse to go ”

Quoth Mrs Gilpin, “ That’s well said ,  
 And for that wine is dear,  
 We will be furnished with our own,  
 Which is both bright and clear ”

John Gilpin kissed his loving wife ,  
 O’erjoyed was he to find,  
 That though on pleasure she was bent,  
 She had a frugal mind

The morning came, the chaise was brought,  
 But yet was not allowed  
 To drive up to the door, lest all  
 Should say that she was proud

So three doors off the chaise was stayed,  
 Where they did all get in ,  
 Six precious souls, and all agog  
 To dash through thick and thin

Smack went the whip, round went the wheels,  
 Were never folk so glad,  
 The stones did rattle underneath,  
 As if Cheapside were mad

John Gilpin at his horse’s side  
 Seized fast the flowing mane,  
 And up he got, in haste to ride,  
 But soon came down agun ,

Her saddle-tree scarce reached had he,  
 His journey to begin,  
 When, turning round his head, he saw,  
 Three customers come in

So down he came, for loss of time  
 Although it grieved him sore,  
 Yet loss of pence, full well he knew,  
 Would trouble him much more

'Twas long before the customers  
 Were suited to their mind,  
 When Betty screaming came downstairs,  
 "The wine is left behind!"

"Good luck!" quoth he—"yet bring it me,  
 My leathern belt likewise,  
 In which I bear my trusty sword,  
 When I do exercise.

Now Mistress Gilpin (careful soul!)  
 Had two stone bottles found,  
 To hold the liquor that she loved,  
 And keep it safe and sound

Each bottle had a curling ear,  
 Through which the belt he drew,  
 And hung a bottle on each side,  
 To make his balance true.

Then over all, that he might be  
 Equipped from top to toe,  
 His long red clout, well brushed and neat,  
 He manfully did throw

Now see him mounted once again  
 Upon his nimble steed,  
 Full slowly pacing o'er the stones,  
 With caution and good heed

But finding soon a smoother road  
 Beneath his well shod feet,  
 The snorting beast began to trot,  
 Which galled him in his seat.

So, "Fur and softly," John he cried,  
 But John he cried in vain,  
 That trot became a gallop soon,  
 In spite of curb and rein

So stooping down, as needs he must  
 Who cannot sit upright,  
 He grasped the mane with both his hands,  
 And eke with all his might

His horse, who never in that sort  
 Had handled been before,  
 What thing upon his back had got  
 Did wonder more and more

Away went Gilpin, neck or nought,  
 Away went hat and wig,  
 He little dreamt, when he set out,  
 Of running such a rig

The wind did blow, the cloak did fly,  
 Like streamer long and gay,  
 Till, loop and button failing both,  
 At last it flew away

Then might all people well discern  
 The bottle he held hung;  
 A bottle swinging at each side,  
 As hath been said of some.

The dogs did bark, the children screamed,  
 Up flew the windows all  
 And every soul cried out, "Well done!"  
 As loud as he could hawl.

Away went Gilpin—who but he?  
 His fame soon spread around,  
 "He carries weight" "He rides a tree"  
 "'Tis for a thousand pound!"

And still, as fast as he drew near,  
 'Twas wonderful to view,  
 How in a trice the turnpike men  
 Their gates wide open threw

And now, as he went bowing down  
 His reeling head full low,  
 The bottles twain behind his back  
 Were shattered at a blow

Down ran the wine into the rye,  
 Most piteous to be seen,  
 Which made his horse's flanks to smoke  
 As they had basted been

But still he seemed to carry weight,  
 With leathern girdle braced,  
 For all might see the bottle necks  
 Still dangling at his waist

Thus all through merry Islington,  
 These gambols he did play,  
 Until he came unto the Wash  
 Of Edmonton so gay ,

And there he threw the Wash about,  
 On both sides of the way,  
 Just like unto a trundling mop,  
 Or a wild goose at play

At Edmonton, his loving wife  
 From the balcony spied  
 Her tender husband, wondering much  
 To see how he did ride.

“ Stop, stop, John Gilpin !—Here’s the house !  
 They all at once did cry ,  
 “ The dinner waits, and we are tired ”—  
 Said Gilpin—“ So am I !”

But yet his horse was not a whit  
 Inclined to tarry there ,  
 For why?—his owner had a house  
 Full ten miles off, at Ware.

So like an arrow swift he flew,  
 Shot by an archer strong ,  
 So did he fly—which brings me to  
 The middle of my song

Away went Gilpin out of breath,  
 And sore against his will,  
 Till at his friend the calender’s  
 His horse at last stood still

The calender, amazed to see  
 His neighbour in such trim,  
 Laid down his pipe, flew to the gate,  
 And thus accosted him

“ What news? what news? your tidings tell  
 Tell me you must and shall—  
 Say why bareheaded you are come,  
 Or why you come at all? ”

Now Gilpin had a pleasant wit,  
 And lov'd a timely joke,  
 And thus unto the calender  
 In merry guise he spoke

“ I came because your horse would come,  
 And if I well forebode,  
 My hat and wig will soon be here,  
 They are upon the road ”

The calender right glad to find  
 His friend in merry pin,  
 Return'd him not a single word,  
 But to the house went in

Whence straight he came with hat and wig,  
 A wig that flow'd behind,  
 A hat not much the worse for wear,  
 Each comely in its kind

He held them up, and in his turn  
 Thus show'd his ready wit  
 “ My head is twice as big as yours,  
 They therefore needs must fit

“ But let me scrape the dirt away  
 That hangs upon your face,  
 And stop and eat, for well you may  
 Be in a hungry case ”

Said John, “ It is my wedding day,  
 And all the world would stare,  
 If wife should dine at Edmonton,  
 And I should dine at Ware ”

So turning to his horse, he said,  
 “ I am in haste to dine ,  
 ’Twas for your pleasure you came here,  
 You shall go back for mine ”

Ah, luckless speech, and bootless boast !  
 For which he paid full dear ,  
 For, while he spake, a braying ass  
 Did sing most loud and clear ,

Whereat his horse did snort, as he  
 Had heard a lion roar,  
 And galloped off with all his might,  
 As he had done before

Away went Gilpin, and away  
 Went Gilpin’s hat and wig  
 He lost them sooner than at first ,  
 For why?—they were too big

Now Mistress Gilpin, when she saw  
 Her husband posting down  
 Into the country far away, ,  
 She pulled out half a crown ,

And thus unto the youth she said  
 That drove them to the Bell,  
 " This shall be yours, when you bring back  
 My husband safe and well "

The youth did ride, and soon did meet  
 John coming back again  
 Whom in a trice he tried to stop,  
 By catching at his rein ,

But not performing what he meant,  
 And gladly would have done,  
 The frightened steed he frightened more,  
 And made him faster run

Away went Gilpin, and away  
 Went postboy at his heels,  
 The postboy's horse right glad to miss  
 The lumbering of the wheels.

Six gentlemen upon the road,  
 Thus seeing Gilpin fly,  
 With postboy scampering in the rear,  
 They raised the hue and cry

" Stop thief ! stop thief !—a highwayman !"  
 Not one of them was mute ,  
 And all and each that passed that way  
 Did join in the pursuit

And now the turnpike gates again  
 Flew open in short space ,  
 The toll men thinking, as before,  
 That Gilpin rode a race

And so he did, and won it too,  
 For he got first to town,  
 Nor stopped till where he had got up  
 He did again get down

Now let us sing, Long live the king !  
 And Gilpin, long live he !  
 And when he next doth ride abroad  
 May I be there to see !

## ODE TO APOLLO

ON AN INK GLASS ALMOST DRIED IN THE SUN

PATRON of all those luckless brains  
 That, to the wrong side leaning,  
 Indite much metre with much pains,  
 And little or no meaning

Ah why, since oceans, rivers, streams,  
 That water all the nations,  
 Pay tribute to thy glorious beams,  
 In constant exhalations,

Why, stooping from the noon of day,  
 Too covetous of drink,  
 Apollo, hast thou stolen away  
 A poet's drop of ink ?

Upborne into the viewless air,  
 It floats a vapour now,  
 Impelled through regions dense and rare  
 By all the winds that blow

Ord'ned, perhaps, ere summer flies,  
 Combined with millions more,  
 To form an Iris in the skies,  
 Though black and foul before

Illustrious drop ! and happy then  
 Beyond the happiest lot,  
 Of all that ever passed my pen,  
 So soon to be forgot !

Phœbus, if such be thy design,  
 To place it in thy bow,  
 Give wit, that what is left may shine  
 With equal grace below

## THE YEARLY DISTRESS,

OR, TITHING TIME AT STOCK, IN ESSSEX.

*Verses addressed to a country clergyman complaining of  
 the disagreeableness of the day annually appointed for  
 receiving the dues at the parsonage*

COME, ponder well, for 'tis no jest,  
 To laugh it would be wrong,  
 The troubles of a worthy priest,  
 The burthen of my song

This priest he merry is and blithe  
 Three quarters of a year,  
 But oh ! it cys him like a scythe  
 When tithing time draws near

He then is full of frights and fears,  
 As one at point to die,  
 And long before the day appears  
 He heaves up many a sigh

For then the farmers come, jog, jog,  
 Along the miry road,  
 Each heart as heavy as a log,  
 To make their payments good

In sooth the sorrow of such days  
 Is not to be express'd,  
 When he that takes and he that pays  
 Are both alike distress'd

Now all unwelcome at his gates  
 The clumsy swains alight,  
 With rueful faces and bald pates,—  
 He trembles at the sight.

And well he may, for well he knows,  
 Each bumpkin of the clan,  
 Instead of paying what he owes,  
 Will cheat him if he can.

So in they come—each makes his leg,  
 And flings his head before,  
 And looks as if he came to beg,  
 And not to quit a score.

“ And how does miss and madam do,  
 The little boy and all?”

“ All tight and well And how do you,  
 Good Mr What d’ye call?”

The dinner comes, and down they sit  
 Were e'er such hungry folk?  
 There's little talking, and no wit,  
 It is no time to joke.

One wipes his nose upon his sleeve,  
 One spits upon the floor,  
 Yet not to give offence or grieve,  
 Holds up the cloth before.

The punch goes round, and they are dull  
 And lumpish still as ever,  
 Like barrels with their bellies full,  
 They only weigh the heavier

At length the busy time begins.  
 "Come, neighbours, we must wag,"—  
 The money chinks, down drop their chins,  
 Each lugging out his bag

One talks of mildew and of frost,  
 And one of storms of hail,  
 And one of pigs that he has lost  
 By maggots at the tail

Quoth one, "A rarer man than you  
 In pulpit none shall hear,  
 But yet methinks to tell you true,  
 You sell it plaguy dear"

Oh, why were farmers made so coarse,  
 Or clergy made so fine?  
 A kick that scarce would move a horse,  
 May kill a sound divine.

Then let the boobies stay at home ,  
 'Twould cost him, I dare say,  
 Less trouble taking twice the sum  
 Without the clowns that pay

## THE DISTRESSED TRAVELLERS , OR, LABOUR IN VAIN

A NEW SONG TO A TUNE NEVER SUNG BEFORE

### 1

I SING of a journey to Clifton  
 We would have performed if we could,  
 Without cart or barrow to lift on  
 Poor Mary and me through the mud  
     Slee sla slud,  
     Stuck in the mud,  
 Oh, it is pretty to wade through a flood !

### 2

So away we went, slipping and sliding,  
 Hop, hop, *à la mode de deux* frogs,  
 'Tis near as good walking as riding,  
 When ladies are dressed in their clogs.  
     Wheels, no doubt,  
     Go briskly about,  
 But they clatter and rattle, and make such a rout !

3

SHE.

“ Well ! now I protest it is charming ,  
How finely the weather improves !  
That cloud, though, is rather alarming,  
How slowly and stately it moves ! ”

HE.

“ Pshaw ! never mind,  
'Tis not in the wind,  
We are travelling south and shall leave it behind ”

4

SHE

“ I am glad we are come for an airing,  
For folks may be pounded and penned,  
Until they grow rusty, not caring  
To stir half a mile to an end ”

HE.

“ The longer we stay,  
The longer we may,  
It's a folly to think about weather or way ”

5

SHE.

“ But now I begin to be frightened ,  
If I fall, what a way I should roll !  
I am glad that the bridge was indicted,—  
Stop ! stop ! I am sunk in a hole ! ”

HE.

“ Nay, never care !  
'Tis a common affair ,  
You'll not be the last that will set a foot there ”

6

SHE

“ Let me breathe now a little, and ponder  
 On what it were better to do ,  
 That terrible line I see yonder,  
 I think we shall never get through ”

HE

“ So think I —  
 But, by the by,  
 We never shall know, if we never should try ”

7

SHE

“ But should we get there, how shall we get home?  
 What a terrible deal of bad road we have past !  
 Slipping and sliding , and if we should come  
 To a difficult stile, I am run'd at last !  
 Oh, this lane ,  
 Now it is plain  
 That struggling and striving is labour in vain ”

8

HE

“ Stuck fast there while I go and look—”

SHE

“ Don't go away, for fear I should fall ! ’

HE

“ I have examined it every nook,  
 And what you see here is a sample of all  
 Come, wheel round,  
 The dirt we have found,  
 Would be an estate at a farthing a pound ”

## 9

Now, sister Anne, the guitar you must take,  
 Set it, and sing it, and make it a song,  
 I have varied the verse for variety's sake,  
 And cut it off short—because it was long  
     'Tis hobbling and lame,  
     Which critics wont blame,  
 For the sense and the sound, they say, should be the  
 same

## ADDRESS TO TOBACCO

OH Nymph of transatlantic fame,  
 Where'er thine haunt, whate'er thy name,  
 Whether reposing on the side  
 Of Oroonoko's spacious tide,  
 Or listening with delight not small  
 To Niagara's distant fall,  
 'Tis time to cherish and to feed  
 The pungent nose refreshing weed,  
 Which, whether pulverised it gain  
 A speedy passage to the brain,  
 Or, whether, touch'd with fire, it rise  
 In circling eddies to the skies,  
 Does thought more quicken and refine  
 Than all the breath of all the Nine—  
 Forgive the bard, if bard he be,  
 Who once too wintonly made free,  
 To touch with a satiric wipe  
 That symbol of thy power, the pipe,

So may no blight infest thy plains  
 And no unseasonable rains ,  
 And so may smiling peace once more  
 Visit America's sad shore ,  
 And thou secure from all alarms,  
 Of thundering drums and glittering arms,  
 Rove unconfined beneath the shade  
 Thy wide expanded leaves have made  
 So may thy votaries increase,  
 And fumigation never cease  
 May Newton with renew'd delights  
 Perform thy odoriferous rites  
 While clouds of incense half divine  
 Involve thy disappearing shrine  
 And so my smoke inhaling Bull  
 Be always filling, never full

## REPORT OF AN ADJUDGED CASE

NOT TO BE FOUND IN ANY OF THE BOOKS

BETWEEN Nose and Eyes a strange contest arose,  
 The spectacles set them unhappily wrong ,  
 The point in dispute was, as all the world knows,  
 To which the said spectacles ought to belong

So Tongue was the lawyer, and argued the cause  
 With a great deal of skill, and a wig full of learning ,  
 While Chief Baron Ear sat to balance the laws,  
 So famed for his talent in nicely discerning

"In behalf of the Nose it will quickly appear,  
 And your lordship," he said, "will undoubtedly find,  
 That the Nose has had spectacles always in wear,  
 Which amounts to possession time out of mind "

Then holding the spectacles up to the court—  
 "Your lordship observes they are made with a straddle,  
 As wide as the ridge of the Nose is, in short,  
 Designed to sit close to it, just like a saddle

"Again, would your lordship a moment suppose  
 ('Tis a case that has happened, and may be again),  
 That the visage or countenance had not a Nose,  
 Pray who would, or who could, wear spectacles then?

"On the whole it appears, and my argument shows,  
 With a reasoning the court will never condemn,  
 That the spectacles plainly were made for the Nose,  
 And the Nose was as plainly intended for them "

Then shifting his side, as a lawyer knows how,  
 He pleaded again in behalf of the Eyes  
 But what were his arguments few people know,  
 For the court did not think they were equally wise.

So his lordship decreed with a grave solemn tone,  
 Decisive and clear, without one if or but—  
 That, whenever the Nose put his spectacles on,  
 By daylight or candlelight—Eyes should be shut !

## THE COLUBRIAD

CROSE by the threshold of a door nailed fast  
 Three kittens sat, each kitten looked aghast  
 I, passing swift and inattentive by,  
 At the three kittens cast a careless eye,  
 Not much concerned to know what they did there,  
 Not deeming kittens worth a poet's care  
 But presently a loud and furious hiss  
 Caused me to stop, and to exclaim, "What's this?"  
 When lo! upon the threshold met my view,  
 With head erect, and eyes of fiery hue,  
 A viper, long as Count de Grasse's queue,  
 Forth from his head his forked tongue he throws,  
 Darting it full against a kitten's nose,  
 Who having never seen, in field or house,  
 The like, sat still and silent as a mouse,  
 Only projecting, with attention due,  
 Her whiskered face, she asked him, "Who are  
     you?"

On to the hall went I, with pace not slow,  
 But swift as lightning, for a long Dutch hoe  
 With which well armed I hastened to the spot,  
 To find the viper, but I found him not  
 And turning up the leaves and shrubs around,  
 Found only that he was not to be found  
 But still the kittens, sitting as before,  
 Sat watching close the bottom of the door  
 "I hope," said I, "the villain I would kill  
 Has slipped between the door and the door sill,  
 And if I make despatch, and follow hard,  
 No doubt but I shall find him in the yard "

For long ere now it should have been rehearsed,  
 'Twas in the garden that I found him first.  
 E'en there I found him, there the full grown cat  
 His head, with velvet paw, did gently pat,  
 As curious as the kittens erst had been  
 To learn what this phenomenon might mean  
 Filled with heroic ardour at the sight,  
 And fearing every moment he would bite,  
 And rob our household of our only cat  
 That was of age to combat with a rat,  
 With outstretched hoe I slew him at the door,  
 And taught him NEVER TO COME THERE NO MORE.

*August 1722*

## THE DOG AND THE WATER LILY

### NO FABLE

THE noon was shady, and soft airs  
 Swept Ouse's silent tide,  
 When, 'scaped from literary cares,  
 I wandered on his side.

My spaniel, prettiest of his race,  
 And high in pedigree  
 (Two nymphs adorned with every grace  
 That spaniel found for me),

Now wantoned, lost in flags and reeds,  
 Now starting into sight,  
 Pursued the swallow o'er the meads  
 With scarce a slower flight

It was the time when Ouse displayed  
 His lilies newly blown ,  
 Their beauties I intent surveyed  
 And one I wished my own

With cane extended far, I sought  
 To steer it close to land ,  
 But still the prize, though nearly caught,  
 Escaped my eager hand

Beru marked my unsuccessful pains  
 With fixed considerate face,  
 And puzzling set his puppy brains  
 To comprehend the case.

But with a chirrup clear and strong  
 Dispersing all his dream,  
 I thence withdrew, and followed long  
 The windings of the stream

My ramble ended, I returned ,  
 Beru, trotting far before,  
 The floating wreath again discerned,  
 And plunging left the shore

I saw him with that lily cropped  
 Impatient swim to meet  
 My quick approach, and soon he dropped  
 The treasure at my feet.

Charmed with the sight, "The world," I cried,  
 " Shall hear of this thy deed  
 My dog shall mortify the pride  
 Of man's superior breed

But chief myself I will enjoin,  
 Awake at duty's call,  
 To show a love as prompt as thine  
 To Him who gives me all "

## ON A SPANIEL, CALLED "BEAU,"

### KILLING A YOUNG BIRD

A SPANIEL, Beau that fares like you,  
 Well fed, and at his ease,  
 Should wiser be than to pursue  
 Each trifle that he sees

But you have killed a tiny bird  
 Which flew not till to-day,  
 Against my orders, whom you heard  
 Forbidding you the prey

Nor did you kill that you might eat  
 And ease a doggish pain ,  
 For him, though chased with furious heat,  
 You left where he was slain

Nor was he of the thievish sort,  
 Or one whom blood allures,  
 But innocent was all his sport  
 Whom you have torn for yours

My dog ! what remedy remains,  
 Since, teach you all I can,  
 I see you, after all my pains,  
 So much resemble man ?

## BEAU'S REPLY

Sir, when I flew to seize the bird  
 In spite of your command,  
 A louder voice than yours I heard,  
 And harder to withstand  
 You cried, "Forbear!"—but in my breast  
 A mightier cried, "Proceed!"—  
 'Twas Nature, sir, whose strong behest  
 Impelled me to the deed  
 Yet much as Nature I respect,  
 I ventured once to break  
 (As you perhaps may recollect)  
 Her precept for your sake,  
 And when your linnet on a day,  
 Passing his prison door,  
 Had fluttered all his strength away  
 And panting pressed the floor,  
 Well knowing him a sacred thing,  
 Not destined to my tooth,  
 I only kissed his ruffled wing,  
 And licked the feathers smooth  
 Let my obedience then excuse  
 My disobedience now,  
 Nor some reproof yourself refuse  
 From your aggrieved Bow wow,  
 If killing birds be such a crime  
 (Which I can hardly see),  
 What think you, sir, of killing Time  
 With verse addressed to me?

## EPITAPH ON A HARE

HERE lies, whom hound did ne'er pursue,  
 Nor swifter greyhound follow,  
 Whose foot ne'er tainted morning dew,  
 Nor ear heard huntsman's halloo ,

Old Tiney, surliest of his kind,  
 Who, nursed with tender care,  
 And to domestic bounds confined,  
 Was still a wild Jack hare

Though duly from my hand he took  
 His pittance every night,  
 He did it with a jealous look,  
 And, when he could, would bite

His diet was of wheaten bread,  
 And milk, and oats, and straw ,  
 Thistles, or lettuces instead,  
 With sand to scour his maw

On twigs of hawthorn he regaled,  
 On pippins' russet peel,  
 And, when his juicy salads failed,  
 Sliced carrot pleased him well

A Turkey carpet was his lawn,  
 Whereon he loved to bound,  
 To skip and gambol like a fawn,  
 And swing his rump around

His frisking was at evening hours,  
 For then he lost his fear,  
 But most before approaching showers,  
 Or when a storm drew near

Eight years and five round rolling moons  
 He thus saw steal away,  
 Dozing out all his idle noons,  
 And every night at play

I kept him for his humour's sake,  
 For he would oft beguile  
 My heart of thoughts that made it ache,  
 And force me to a snile

But now beneath this walnut shade  
 He finds his long last home,  
 And waits, in snug concealment hid,  
 Till gentler Puss shall come.

He, still more aged, feels the shocks  
 From which no care can save,  
 And, partner once of Tiney's box,  
 Must soon partake his grave

## EPITAPHIUM ALTERUM

HIC etiam jacet,  
 Qui totum novennium vixit,  
     Puss.  
     Siste paulisper,  
     Qui preteriturus es,  
 Et tecum sic reputa—  
 Hunc neque canis venaticus,  
     Nec plumbum missile,  
     Nec laqueus,  
     Nec imbres nimii,  
     Confecere  
 Tamen mortuus est—  
     Ut monar ego

PAIRING TIME ANTICIPATED <sup>1</sup>

## A FABLE

I SHALL not ask Jean Jacques Rousseau  
 If birds confabulate or no,  
 'Tis clear that they were always able  
 To hold discourse, at least in fable,

<sup>1</sup> It was one of the whimsical speculations of this philosopher that all fables which ascribe reason and speech to animals should be withheld from children, as being only vehicles of deception. But what child was ever deceived by them, or can be, against the evidence of his senses?

And even the child who knows no better  
 Than to interpret by the letter  
 A story of a cock and bull,  
 Must have a most uncommon skull

It chanced then on a winter's day,  
 But warm and bright and calm as May,  
 The birds, conceiving a design  
 To forestall sweet St Valentine,  
 In many an orchard, copse, and grove,  
 Assembled on affairs of love,  
 And with much twitter and much chatter  
 Began to agitate the matter  
 At length a Bullfinch, who could boast  
 More years and wisdom than the most,  
 Entreated, opening wide his beak,  
 A moment's liberty to speak,  
 And, silence publicly enjoined,  
 Delivered briefly thus his mind

"My friends! be cautious how ye treat  
 The subject upon which we meet,  
 I fear we shall have winter yet"

A Finch, whose tongue I new no control,  
 With golden wing and satin poll,  
 A last year's bird, who ne'er had tried  
 What marriage means, thus pert replied  
 "Methinks the gentleman," quoth she,  
 "Opposite in the apple tree,  
 By his good will would keep us single  
 Till yonder heaven and earth shall mingle,  
 Or (which is likelier to befall)  
 Till death exterminate us all  
 I marry without more ado,  
 My dear Dick Redcap, what say you?"

Dick heard, and tweedling, ogling, bridling,  
 Turning short round, strutting, and sideling,

Attested, glad, his approbation  
 Of an immediate conjugation  
 Their sentiments so well express'd  
 Influenced mightily the rest .

All pair'd, and each pair built a nest

But though the birds were thus in haste,  
 The leaver came on not quite so fast,  
 And destiny, that sometimes bears  
 An aspect stern on man's affairs,  
 Not altogether smiled on theirs  
 The wind, of late breathed gently forth,  
 Now shifted east, and east by north ,  
 Bare trees and shrubs but ill, you know,  
 Could shelter them from rain or snow  
 Stepping into their nests they paddled,  
 Themselves were chill'd, their eggs were addled .  
 Soon every father bird and mother  
 Grew quarrelsome, and peck'd each other,  
 Parted without the least regret,  
 Except that they had ever met,  
 And learned in future to be wiser  
 Than to neglect a good adviser

#### MORAL

Misses ! the tale that I relate

This lesson seems to carry —

Choose not alone a proper mate,

But proper time to marry

## AN EPITAPH

HERE lies one who never drew  
 Blood himself, yet many slew ,  
 Gave the gun its aim, and figure  
 Made in field, yet ne'er pulled trigger  
 Armed men have gladly made  
 Him their guide, and him obeyed ,  
 At his signified desire,  
 Would advance, present, and fire  
 Stout he was, and large of limb,  
 Scores have fled at sight of him !  
 And to all this fame he rose  
 Only following his nose  
 Neptune was he called , not he  
 Who controls the boisterous sea,  
 But of happier command,  
 Neptune of the furrowed land ,  
 And, your wonder vain to shorten,  
*Painter to Sir John Throckmorton*

A TALE <sup>1</sup>

IN Scotland's realm, where trees are few,  
 Nor even shrubs abound,  
 But where, however bleak the view,  
 Some better things are found

For husband there and wife may boast  
 Their union undefiled,  
 And false ones are as rare almost  
 As hedge rows in the wild

In Scotland's realm forlorn and bare  
 This history chanced of late,—  
 This history of a wedded pair,  
 A chaffinch and his mate

The spring drew near, each felt a breast  
 With genial instinct filled,  
 They paired, and would have built a nest,  
 But found not where to build

<sup>1</sup> This tale is founded on an article of intelligence which the author found in the *Buckinghamshire Herald* for Saturday, June 1, 1793, in the following words —

“Glasgow, May 23

“In a block, or pulley, near the head of the mast of a gabbert, now lying at the Broomielaw, there is a chaffinch's nest and four eggs. The nest was built while the vessel lay at Greenock, and was followed hither by both birds. Though the block is occasionally lowered for the inspection of the curious, the birds have not forsaken the nest. The cock, however, visits the nest but seldom, while the hen never leaves it but when she descends to the hull for food.”

The heathis uncovered and the moors  
 Except with snow and sleet,  
 Sea beaten rocks and naked shores,  
 Could yield them no retreat.

Long time a breeding place they sought,  
 Till both grew vexed and tired,  
 At length a ship arriving brought  
 The good so long desired

A ship!—could such a restless thing  
 Afford them place of rest?  
 Or was the merchant charged to bring  
 The homeless birds a nest?

Hush?—silent hearers profit most,—  
 This racer of the sea  
 Proved kinder to them than the coast,  
 It served them with a tree.

But such a tree! 'twas shaven deal,  
 The tree they call a mast,  
 And had a hollow with a wheel  
 Through which the tackle passed

Within that cavity aloft  
 Their roofless home they fixed,  
 Form'd with materials neat and soft,  
 Bents, wool, and feathers mixed

Four ivory eggs soon pave its floor,  
 With russet specks bedight,  
 The vessel weighs, forsakes the shore,  
 And lessens to the sight

The mother bird is gone to sea  
 As she had changed her kind ,  
 But goes the male? Far wiser, he  
 Is doubtless left behind

No—soon as from ashore he saw  
 The wingèd mansion move,  
 He flew to reach it, by a law  
 Of never failing love ,

Then perching at his consort's side,  
 Was briskly borne along,  
 The billows and the blast defied,  
 And cheer'd her with a song

The seaman with sincere delight  
 His feather'd shipmates eyes,  
 Scarce less exulting in the sight  
 Than when he tows a prize

For seamen much believe in signs,  
 And from a chance so new  
 Each some approaching good divines,  
 And may his hopes be true !

Hail, honour'd land ! a desert where  
 Not even birds can hide,  
 Yet parent of this loving pair  
 Whom nothing could divide

And ye who, rather than resign  
 Your matrimonial plan,  
 Were not afraid to plough the brine  
 In company with man ,

For whose lean country much disdain  
 We English often show ,  
 Yet from a richer nothing gain  
 But wantonness and woe ,

Be it your fortune, year by year,  
 The same resource to prove,  
 And may ye sometimes landing here,  
 Instruct us how to love !

### THE FAITHFUL BIRD

THE greenhouse is my summer seat ,  
 My shrubs displaced from that retreat  
 Enjoyed the open air ,  
 Two goldfinches, whose sprightly song  
 Had been their mutual solace long,  
 Lived happy prisoners there

They sang as blithe as finches sing  
 That flutter loose on golden wing,  
 And frolic where they list ,  
 Strangers to liberty, 'tis true,  
 But that delight they never knew,  
 And therefore never missed

But nature works in every breast,  
 With force not easily suppressed ,  
 And Dick felt some desires,

That, after many an effort vain,  
 Instructed him at length to gain  
 A pass between his wires

The open window seemed to invite  
 The freeman to a farewell flight,  
 But Tom was still confined,  
 And Dick, although his way was clear,  
 Was much too generous and sincere  
 To leave his friend behind

So settling on his cage, by play,  
 And chirp, and kiss, he seemed to say,  
 "You must not live alone,"—  
 Nor would he quit that chosen stand  
 Till I, with slow and cautious hand,  
 Returned him to his own

O ye, who never taste the joys  
 Of friendship, satisfied with noise,  
 Fandango, ball, and rout!  
 Blush when I tell you how a bird  
 A prison with a friend preferred  
 To liberty without.

## THE NIGHTINGALE AND GLOWWORM

A NIGHTINGALE, that all day long  
 Hath cheer'd the village with his song,  
 Nor yet at eve his note suspended,  
 Nor yet when eventide was ended,

Began to feel, as well he might,  
 The keen demands of appetite ,  
 When, looking eagerly round,  
 He spied far off, upon the ground,  
 A something shining in the dark,  
 And knew the glowworm by his spark ,  
 So stooping down from hawthorn top,  
 He thought to put him in his crop  
 The worm, aware of his intent,  
 Harangued him thus, right eloquent —  
 " Did you admire my lamp," quoth he,  
 " As much as I your minstrelsy,  
 You would abhor to do me wrong,  
 As much as I to spoil your song ,  
 For 'twas the self same power Divine  
 Taught you to sing, and me to shine,  
 That you with music, I with light,  
 Might beautify and cheer the night "

The songster heard his short oration,  
 And, warbling out his approbation,  
 Released him, as my story tells,  
 And found a supper somewhere else

Hence jarring sectaries may learn  
 Their real interest to discern ,  
 That brother should not war with brother,  
 And worry and devour each other ,  
 But sing and shine with sweet consent,  
 Till life's poor transient night is spent,  
 Respecting in each other's case  
 The gifts of nature and of grace

Those Christians best deserve the name,  
 Who studiously make peace their aim ,  
 Peace both the duty and the prize  
 Of him that creeps and him that flies

MISCELLANEOUS.



## THE PROGRESS OF POETRY

AGES elapsed ere Homer's lamp appeared,  
And ages ere the Mantuan Swan was heard ,  
To carry nature lengths unknown before,  
To give a Milton birth, asked ages more  
Thus Genius rose and set at ordered times,  
And shot a day spring into distant climes ,  
Ennobling every region that he chose,  
He sunk in Greece, in Italy he rose,  
And, tedious years of Gothic darkness past,  
Emerg'd all splendour in our isle at last  
Thus lovely halcyons dive into the main,  
Then show far off their shining plumes again

These were the chief , each interval of night  
Was graced with many an undulating light ,  
In less illustrious bards his beauty shone  
A meteor or a star , in these, the sun

The nightingale may claim the topmost bough,  
While the poor grasshopper must chirp below  
Like him unnoticed, I, and such as I,  
Spread little wings, and rather skip than fly ,  
Perched on the meagre produce of the land,  
An ell or two of prospect we command,  
But never peep beyond the thorny bound,  
Or oaken fence, that hems the paddock round

In Eden, ere yet innocence of heart  
Had faded, poetry was not an art ,

Language above all teaching, or if taught,  
 Only by gratitude and glowing thought,—  
 Elegant as simplicity, and warm  
 As ecstacy, unmanacled by form,—  
 Not prompted, as in our degenerate days,  
 By low ambition and the thirst of praise,  
 Was natural as is the flowing stream,  
 And yet magnificent, as God the theme.  
 That theme on earth exhausted, though above  
 'Tis found as everlasting as His love,  
 Man lavished all his thoughts on human things,  
 The feats of heroes and the wrath of kings,  
 But still while virtue kindled his delight,  
 The song was moral, and so far was right  
 'Twas thus till luxury seduced the mind  
 To joys less innocent, as less refined,  
 Then genius danced a bacchanal, he crowned  
 The brimming goblet, seized the thyrsus, bound  
 His brows with ivy, rushed into the field  
 Of wild imagination, and there reeled,  
 The victim of his own lascivious fires,  
 And, dizzy with delight, profaned the sacred wires  
 Anacreon, Horace, played in Greece and Rome  
 This Bedlam part, and, others nearer home.  
 When Cromwell fought for power, and while he  
     reigned  
 The proud Protector of the power he gained,  
 Religion harsh, intolerant, austere,  
 Parent of manners like herself severe,  
 Drew a rough copy of the Christian face  
 Without the smile, the sweetness, or the grace,  
 The dark and sullen humour of the time  
 Judged every effort of the Muse a crime,  
 Verse in the finest mould of fancy cast,  
 Was lumber in an age so void of taste

But when the second Charles assumed the way,  
And arts revived beneath a softer day,  
Then like a bow long forced into a curve,  
The mind, released from too constrained a nerve,  
Flew to its first position with a spring  
That made the vaulted roofs of pleasure ring  
His court, the dissolute and hateful school  
Of wantonness, where vice was taught by rule,  
Swarmed with a scribbling herd as deep imbred  
With brutal lust as ever Circe made  
From these a long succession in the rage  
Of rank obscenity debauched their age,  
Nor ceased, till, ever anxious to redress  
The abuses of her sacred charge, the press,  
The Muse instructed a well nurtured train  
Of abler votaries to cleanse the strain,  
And claim the palm for purity of song,  
That lewdness had usurped and worn so long  
Then decent pleasantry and sterling sense,  
That neither gave nor would endure offence,  
Whipped out of sight, with satire just and keen,  
The puppy pack that had defiled the scene

    In front of these came Addison   In him  
Humour, in holiday and slightly trim,  
Sublimity and Attic taste combined,  
To polish, furnish, and delight the mind  
Then Pope, as harmony itself exact,  
In verse well disciplined, complete, compact,  
Gave virtue and morality a grace  
That, quite eclipsing pleasure's painted face,  
Levied a tax of wonder and applause,  
Even on the fools that trampled on their laws  
But he (his musical finesse was such,  
So nice his ear, so delicate his touch)  
Made poetry a mere mechanic art,

And every warbler has his tune by heart  
 Nature imparting her satiric gift,  
 Her serious mirth, to Arbuthnot and Swift,  
 With droll sobriety they raised a smile  
 At folly's cost, themselves unmoved the while,  
 That constellation set, the world in vain  
 Must hope to look upon their like again

*Table Talk*

## POETIC INSPIRATION

NATURE, exerting an unwearied power,  
 Forms, opens, and gives scent to every flower,  
 Spreads the fresh verdure of the field, and leads  
 The dancing Nymphs through the dewy meads,  
 She fills profuse ten thousand little throats  
 With music, modulating all their notes,  
 And charms the woodland scenes and wilds un-  
     known,  
 With artless airs and concerts of her own,  
 But seldom (as if fearful of expense)  
 Vouchsafes to man a poet's just pretence—  
 Fervency, freedom, fluency of thought,  
 Harmony, strength, words exquisitely sought,  
 Fancy, that from the bow that spans the sky  
 Brings colours, dipp'd in heaven, that never die,  
 A soul exalted above earth, a mind  
 Skill'd in the characters that form mankind,  
 And, as the sun, in rising beauty dress'd,  
 Looks to the westward from the dappled east,

And marks, whatever clouds may interpose  
Ere yet his race begins, its glorious close,  
An eye like his to catch the distant goal,  
Or, ere the wheels of verse begin to roll,  
Like his to shed illuminating rays  
On every scene and subject it surveys,  
Thus graced, the man assert's a poet's name,  
And the world cheerfully admits the claim

Pity Religion has so seldom found  
A skilful guide into poetic ground !  
The flowers would spring where'er she deign'd to  
stray,

And every Muse attend her in her way  
Virtue indeed meets many a rhyming friend,  
And many a compliment politely penn'd ,  
But, unattired in that becoming vest  
Religion weaves for her, and half undress'd,  
Stands in the desert, shivering and forlorn,  
A wintry figure, like a wither'd thorn  
The shelves are full, all other themes are sped,  
Hackney'd and worn to the last flimsy thread ,  
Satire has long since done his best, and curst  
And loathsome ribaldry has done his worst ,  
Fancy has sported all her powers away  
In tales, in trifles, and in children's play ,  
And 'tis the sad complaint, and almost true,  
Whate'er we write, we bring forth nothing new  
'Twere new indeed, to see a bard all fire,  
Touch'd with a coal from Heaven, assume the lyre,  
And tell the world, still kindling as he sung,  
With more than mortal music on his tongue,  
That He, who died below, and reigns above,  
Inspires the song, and that His name is Love

*Table-Talk*

AN EPISTLE TO JOSEPH HILL.<sup>1</sup>

DEAR Joseph—five and twenty years ago—  
 Alas, how time escapes!—'tis even so—  
 With frequent intercourse, and always sweet,  
 And always friendly, we were wont to cheat  
 A tedious hour—and now we never meet!  
 As some grave gentleman in Terence says  
 ('Twas therefore much the same in ancient days),  
 Good luck, we know not what to-morrow brings—  
 Strange fluctuation of all human things!  
 True. Changes will befall, and friends may part,  
 But distance only cannot change the heart  
 And, were I call'd to prove the assertion true,  
 One proof should serve—a reference to you

Whence comes it then, that in the wane of life,  
 Though nothing have occur'd to kindle strife,  
 We find the friends we fancied we had won,  
 Though numerous once, reduced to few or none?  
 Can gold grow worthless that has stood the touch?  
 No, gold they seem'd, but they were never such

Horatio's servant once, with bow and cringe,  
 Swinging the parlour door upon its hinge,  
 Dreading a negative, and overawed  
 Lest he should trespass, begg'd to go abroad  
 "Go, fellow!—whither?"—turning short about—  
 "Nay—stay at home—you're always going out"  
 "'Tis but a step, sir, just at the street's end"—  
 "For what?"—"An' please you, sir, to see a friend"  
 "A friend!" Horatio cried, and seem'd to start—

<sup>1</sup> An early friend of Cowper's, who introduced him to Thurlow. He was made the Chancellor's Secretary.

“ Yea, marry shalt thou, and with all my heart  
And fetch my cloak , for though the night be raw,  
I'll see him too—the first I ever saw ”

I knew the man, and knew his nature mild,  
And was his plaything often when a child ,  
But somewhat at that moment pinch'd him close,  
Else he was seldom bitter or morose  
Perhaps, his confidence just then betray'd,  
His grief might prompt him with the speech he made ,  
Perhaps 'twas mere good humour gave it birth,  
The harmless play of pleasantry and mirth  
Howe'er it was, his language in my mind,  
Bespoke at least a man that knew mankind

But not to moralise too much, and strain  
To prove an evil of which all complain  
(I hate long arguments verbosely spun),  
One story more, dear Hill, and I have done  
Once on a time, an emperor, a wise man,  
No matter where, in China or Japan,  
Decreed, that whosoever should offend  
Against the well known duties of a friend,  
Convicted once, should ever after wear  
But half a coat, and show his bosom bare  
The punishment importing this, no doubt,  
That all was nought within, and all found out

O happy Britain ! we have not to fear  
Such hard and arbitrary measure here ,  
Else, could a law like that which I relate  
Once have the sanction of our triple state,  
Some few that I have known in days of old,  
Would run most dreadful risk of catching cold ,  
While you, my friend, whatever wind should blow,  
Might traverse England safely to and fro,  
An honest man, close buttoned to the chin,  
Broadcloth without, and a warm belt within

TO THE REV WILLIAM CAWTHORNE  
UNWIN

UNWIN, I should but ill repay  
The kindness of a friend,  
Whose worth deserves as warm a lay  
As ever friendship penned,  
Thy name omitted in a page  
That would reclaim a vicious age

A union formed, as mine with thee,  
Not rashly or in sport,  
May be as fervent in degree,  
And faithful in its sort,  
And may as rich in comfort prove,  
As that of true fraternal love

The bud inserted in the rind,  
The bud of peach or rose,  
Adorns, though differing in its kind,  
The stock whereon it grows,  
With flower as sweet or fruit as fair  
As if produced by nature there

Not rich, I render what I may,  
I seize thy name in haste,  
And place it in this first assay,  
Lest this should prove the last  
Tis where it should be—in a plan  
That holds in view the good of man

The poet's lyre, to fix his fame,  
Should be the poet's heart,  
Affection lights a brighter flame  
Than ever blazed by art.  
No muses on these lines attend,  
I sink the poet in the friend

VERSES TO THE MEMORY OF DR  
LLOYD,<sup>1</sup> OF WESTMINSTER SCHOOL

SPOKEN AT THE WESTMINSTER FLECTION NEXT  
AFTER HIS DECEASE.

OUR good old friend is gone, gone to his rest,  
Whose social converse was itself a feast,  
O ye of riper years, who recollect  
How once ye loved and eyed him with respect,  
Both in the firmness of his better day,  
While yet he ruled you with a father's sway,  
And when impair'd by time, and glad to rest,  
Yet still with looks in mild complacence drest,  
He took his annual seat, and mingled here  
His sprightly vein with yours,—now drop a tear  
In morals blameless as in manners meek,  
He knew no wish that he might blush to speak,  
But, happy in whatever state below,  
And richer than the rich in being so,

<sup>1</sup> Translated from the Latin verses then spoken, of which Cowper says, "Their elegance will sufficiently recommend them to persons of classical taste and erudition "

Obtain'd the hearts of all, and such a meed  
 At length from one, as made him rich indeed  
 Hence, then, ye titles, hence, not wanted here '  
 Go, garnish merit in a higher sphere,  
 The brows of those, whose more exalted lot  
 He could congratulate, but envied not.  
 Light lie the turf, good senior, on thy breast '  
 And tranquil as thy mind was, be thy rest,  
 Though, living, thou hadst more desert than fame,  
 And not a stone now chronicles thy name.

## ON THE PROMOTION OF EDWARD THURLOW, ESQ.,

TO THE LORD HIGH CHANCELLORSHIP OF ENGLAND

ROUND Thurlow's head in early youth,  
 And in his sportive days,  
 Fair Science poured the light of truth,  
 And Genius shed his rays.

" See ! " with united wonder cried  
 The experienced and the sage,  
 " Ambition in a boy supplied  
 With all the skill of age "

" Discernment, eloquence, and grace  
 Proclaim him born to sway  
 The balance in the highest place,  
 And bear the palm away "

The prize bestowed was just and wise,  
He sprung impetuous forth,  
Secure of conquest where the prize  
Attends superior worth

So the best courser on the plain  
Lest yet he starts is known,  
And does but at the goal obtain  
What all had deemed his own

1772.

## TO WARREN HASTINGS, ESQ

BY AN OLD SCHOOLFELLOW OF HIS AT WESTMINSTER

HASTINGS! I knew thee young, and of a mind  
While young, humane, conversable, and kind,  
Nor can I well believe thee, gentle then,  
Now grown a villain, and the worst of men  
But rather some suspect, who have oppress'd  
And worried thee, as not themselves the best

SONNET TO WILLIAM WILBERFORCE,  
ESQ

THY country, Wilberforce, with just disdain,  
Hears thee by cruel men and impious call'd  
Fanatic, for thy zeal to loose the enthrall'd  
From exile, public sale, and slavery's chain  
Friend of the poor, the wrong'd, the fetter gall'd,  
Fear not lest labour such as thine be vain

Thou hast achieved a part, hast gain'd the ear  
Of Britain's senate to thy glorious cause,  
Hope smiles, joy springs, and, though cold caution pause  
And weave delay, the better hour is near  
That shall remunerate thy toils severe  
By peace for Afric, fenced with British laws

Enjoy what thou hast won, esteem and love  
From all the just on earth, and all the blest above.

*April 1792*

LINES COMPOSED FOR A MEMORIAL  
OF ASHLEY COWPER, ESQ,

IMMEDIATELY AFTER HIS DEATH, BY HIS NEPHEW  
WILLIAM OF WESTON

FAREWELL ! endued with all that could engage  
All hearts to love thee, both in youth and age '  
In prime of life, for sprightliness enrolled  
Among the gay, yet virtuous as the old ,

In life's last stage (O blessing rarely found !),  
Pleasant as youth with all its blossoms crowned,  
Through every period of this changeful state  
Unchanged thyself—wise, good, affectionate '

Marble may flatter, and lest this should seem  
O'ercharged with praises on so dear a theme,  
Although thy worth be more than half suppress'd,  
Love shall be satisfied, and veil the rest.

*June 1788*

SONNET ADDRESSED TO HENRY  
COWPER, ESQ,

*On his emphatical and interesting delivery of the defence  
of Warren Hastings, Esq , in the House of Lords*

COWPER, whose silver voice, tasked sometimes hard,  
Legends prolix delivers in the ears  
(Attentive when thou readest) of England's peers,  
Let verse at length yield thee thy just reward

Thou wast not heard with drowsy disregard,  
Expendng late on all that length of plea  
Thy generous powers , but silence honoured thee,  
Mute as e'er gazed on orator or bard

Thou art not voice alone, but hast beside  
Both heart and head , and couldst with music sweet  
Of Attic phrase and senatorial tone,  
Like thy renowned forefathers, far and wide  
Thy fame diffuse, praised not for utterance meet  
Of others' speech, but magic of *thy own*

## EPITAPH ON DR JOHNSON

HERE Johnson lies, a sage by all allowed,  
Whom to have bred may well make England proud,  
Whose prose was eloquence, by wisdom taught,  
The graceful vehicle of virtuous thought,  
Whose verse may chum, grave, masculine, and strong,  
Superior praise to the mere poet's song,  
Who many a noble gift from Heaven possessed,  
And faith at last, done worth all the rest  
O man, immortal by a double prize,  
By fame on earth, by glory in the skies !

## ON THE LOSS OF THE ROYAL GEORGE

WRITTEN WHEN THE NEWS ARRIVED

TOLL for the brave !  
The brave that are no more !  
All sunk beneath the wave,  
Fast by their native shore !

Light hundred of the brave,  
Whose courage well was tried,  
Had made the vessel heel,  
And laid her on her side

## MISCELLANEOUS

A land breeze shook the shrouds,  
And she was over set,  
Down went the Royl George,  
With all her crew complete

Toll for the brave !  
Brave Kempensfelt is gone ,  
His lst sea fight is fought ,  
His work of glory done

It was not in the battle ,  
No tempest gave the shock ,  
She sprang no fatal leak ,  
She ran upon no rock.

His sword was in its sheath ,  
His fingers held the pen,  
When Kempensfelt went down  
With twice four hundred men

Weigh the vessel up,  
Once dreaded by our foes '  
And mingle with our cup  
The tear that England owes

Her timbers yet are sound,  
And she may float again  
Full charged with England's thunder,  
And plough the distant main

But Kempensfelt is gone,  
His victories are o'er ,  
And he and his eight hundred  
Shall plough the wave no more

## ON OBSERVING SOME NAMES OF LITTLE NOTE

RECORDED IN THE "BIOGRAPHIA BRITANNICA"

Oh, ferd attempt to give a deathless lot  
To names ignoble, born to be forgot !  
In vain, recorded in historic page,  
They court the notice of a future age  
Those twinkling tiny lustres of the land  
Drop one by one from Fame's neglecting hand,  
Lethargic gulfs receive them as they fall,  
And dark oblivion soon absorbs them all

So when a child (as playful children use)  
Has burnt to tinder a stale last year's news,  
The flame extinct, he views the roving fire—  
There goes my lady, and there goes the squire,  
There goes the parson, oh illustrious spark !  
And there, scarce less illustrious, goes the clerk !

## THE ROSE

THE rose had been washed, just washed in a shower,  
Which Mary to Anna conveyed,  
The plentiful moisture encumbered the flower,  
And weighed down its beautiful head

The cup was all filled, and the leaves were all wet,  
And it seemed, to a fanciful view,  
To weep for the buds it had left with regret  
On the flourishing bush where it grew

I hastily seized it, unfit as it was  
For a nosegay, so dripping and drowned ,  
And swinging it rudely, too rudely, alas !  
I snapped it—it fell to the ground

“ And such,” I exclaimed, “ is the pitiless part  
Some act by the delicate mind,  
Regardless of wringing and breaking a heart  
Already to sorrow resigned !

“ This elegant rose, had I shaken it less,  
Might have bloomed with its owner awhile ,  
And the tear that is wiped with a little address  
May be followed perhaps by a smile.”

### THE POPLAR FIELD

THE poplars are fell'd , farewell to the shade,  
And the whispering sound of the cool colonnade '   
The winds play no longer and sing in the leaves,  
Nor Ouse on his bosom their image receives

Twelve years have elapsed since I first took a view  
Of my favourite field, and the bank where they grew ,  
And now in the grass behold they are laid,  
And the tree is my seat that once lent me a shade '

The blackbird has fled to another retreat,  
Where the hazels afford him a screen from the heat,  
And the scene where his melody charm'd me before  
Resounds with his sweet flowing ditty no more

My fugitive years are all hasting away,  
And I must ere long lie as lowly as they,  
With a turf on my breast, and a stone at my head,  
Ere another such grove shall arise in its stead

'Tis a sight to engage me, if anything can,  
To muse on the perishing pleasures of man  
Though his life be a dream, his enjoyments, I see,  
Have a being less durable even than he

## BOADICEA

### AN ODE.

WHEN the British warrior queen  
Bleeding from the Roman rods,  
Sought, with an indignant mien,  
Counsel of her country's gods,

Sage beneath a spreading oak  
Sat the Druid, hoary chief,  
Every burning word he spoke  
Full of rage and full of grief

- “ Princess ! if our aged eyes  
    Weep upon thy matchless wrongs,  
’Tis because resentment ties  
    All the terrors of our tongues.
- “ Rome shall perish,—write that word  
    In the blood that she has spilt ,  
Perish hopeless and abhorred,  
    Deep in ruin as in guilt
- “ Rome, for empire far renowned,  
    Tramples on a thousand states ,  
Soon her pride shall kiss the ground,—  
    Hark ! the Gaul is at her gates
- “ Other Romans shall arise,  
    Heedless of a soldier’s name,  
Sounds, not arms, shall win the prize,  
    Harmony the path to fame
- “ Then the progeny that springs  
    From the forests of our land,  
Armed with thunder, clad with wings,  
    Shall a wider world command,
- “ Regions Cæsar never knew  
    Thy posterity shall sway,  
Where his eagles never flew,  
    None invincible as they ”

Such the bard’s prophetic words,  
    Pregnant with celestial fire,  
Bending as he swept the chords  
    Of his sweet but awful lyre

She, with all a monarch's pride,  
Felt them in her bosom glow,  
Rushed to battle, fought and died,  
Dying, hurled them at the foe

“ Ruffians, pitiless as proud,  
Heaven awards the vengeance due,  
Empire is on us bestowed,  
Shame and ruin wait for you ”

### YARDLEY OAK

SURVIVOR sole, and hardly such, of all  
That once lived here, thy brethren !—at my birth  
(Since which I number threescore winters past)  
A shattered veteran, hollow-trunked perhaps,  
As now, and with excoriate forks deform,  
Relics of ages !—could a mind, imbued  
With truth from Heaven, created thing adore,  
I might with reverence kneel and worship thee

It seems idolatry with some excuse,  
When our forefather Druids in their oaks  
Imagined sanctity    The conscience, yet  
Unpurified by an authentic act  
Of amnesty, the meed of blood divine,  
Loved not the light, but, gloomy, into gloom  
Of thickest shades, like Adam after taste  
Of fruit proscribed, as to a refuge, fled

Thou wast a bauble once, a cup and ball,  
Which babes might play with, and the thievish jay,

Seeking her food, with ease might have purloined  
 The auburn nut that held thee, swallowing down  
 Thy yet close folded latitude of boughs,  
 And all thine embryo vastness, at a gulp  
 But fate thy growth decreed, autumnal rains  
 Beneath thy parent tree mellowed the soil  
 Designed thy cradle, and a skipping deer,  
 With pointed hoof dibbling the glebe, prepared  
 The soft receptacle, in which, secure,  
 Thy rudiments should sleep the winter through  
 So fancy dreams    Disprove it, if ye can,  
 Ye reasoners broad awake, whose busy search  
 Of argument, employed too oft amiss,  
 Sifts half the pleasures of short life away!

Thou fell'st mature, and in the loamy clod  
 Swelling with vegetative force instinct  
 Didst burst thine egg, as theirs the fabled Twins,  
 Now stars, two lobes, protruding, paired exact,  
 A leaf succeeded, and another leaf,  
 And, all the elements thy puny growth  
 Fostering propitious, thou becamest a twig  
 Who lived when thou wast such? Oh, couldst  
 thou speak,

As in Dodona once thy kindred trees  
 Oracular, I would not curious ask  
 The future, best unknown, but at thy mouth  
 Inquisitive, the less ambiguous past

By thee I might correct, erroneous oft,  
 The clock of history, facts and events  
 Timing more punctual, unrecorded facts  
 Recovering, and misstated setting right—  
 Desperate attempt, till tree shall speak again!

Time made thee what thou wast, king of the woods,  
 And Time hath made thee what thou art—a cave  
 For owls to roost in    Once thy spreading boughs

O'erhung the champagn , and the numerous flocks  
That grazed it stood beneath that ample cope  
Uncrowded, yet safe sheltered from the storm  
No flock frequents thee now    Thou hast outlived  
Thy popularity, and art become  
(Unless verse rescue thee awhile) a thing  
Forgotten, as the foliage of thy youth

While thus through all the stages thou hast pushed  
Of treeship—first a seedling, hid in grass ,  
Then twig , then sapling , and, as century rolled  
Slow after century, a giant bulk  
Of girth enormous, with moss cushioned root  
Upheaved above the soil, and sides embossed  
With prominent wens globose,—till at the last  
The rottenness, which Time is charged to inflict  
On other mighty ones, found also thee.

What exhibitions various hath the world  
Witnessed, of mutability in all  
That we account most durable below !  
Change is the diet on which all subsist,  
Created changeable, and change at last  
Destroys them    Skies uncertain, now the heat  
Transmitting cloudless, and the solar beam  
Now quenching in a boundless sea of clouds,—  
Calm and alternate storm, moisture and drought,  
Invigorate by turns the springs of life  
In all that live, plant, animal, and man,  
And in conclusion mar them    Nature's threads,  
Fine passing thought, even in her coarsest works,  
Delight in agitation, yet sustain  
The force that agitates, not unimpaired ,  
But, worn by frequent impulse, to the cause  
Of their best tone their dissolution owe

Thought cannot spend itself, comparing still  
The great and little of thy lot, thy growth

From almost nullity into a state  
 Of matchless grandeur, and declension thence,  
 Slow, into such magnificent decay  
 Time was when, settling on thy leaf, a fly  
 Could shake thee to the root—and time has been  
 When tempests could not. At thy firmest age  
 Thou hadst within thy bole solid contents,  
 That might have ribbed the sides and planked the deck  
 Of some flagged admiral, and tortuous arms,  
 The shipwright's darling treasure, didst present  
 To the four quartered winds, robust and bold,  
 Warped into tough knee-timber, many a load !  
 But the axe spared thee In those thrifter days  
 Oaks fell not, hewn by thousands, to supply  
 The bottomless demands of contest, waged  
 For senatorial honours. Thus to Time  
 The task was left to whittle thee away  
 With his sly scythe, whose ever nibbling edge,  
 Noiseless, an atom and an atom more,  
 Disjoining from the rest, has, unobserved,  
 Achieved a labour, which had, far and wide,  
 By man perform'd, made all the forest ring  
     Embowell'd now, and of thy ancient self  
 Possessing nought but the scoop'd rind, that seems  
 A huge throat calling to the clouds for drink,  
 Which it would give in rivulets to thy root,  
 Thou temptest none, but rather much forbid'st  
 The feller's toil, which thou couldst ill requite.  
 Yet is thy root sincere, sound as the rock.  
 A quarry of stout spurs, and knotted fangs,  
 Which, crook'd into a thousand whimsies, clasp  
 The stubborn soil, and hold thee still erect  
     So stands a kingdom, whose foundation yet  
 Fails not in virtue, and in wisdom laid,  
 Though all the superstructure, by the tooth

Pulverised of venality, a shell  
Stands now, and semblance only of itself

Thine arms have left thee    Winds have rent  
    them off

Long since, and rovers of the forest wild  
With bow and shaft have burnt them    Some have left  
A splinter'd stump bleach'd to a snowy white,  
And some memorial none where once they grew  
Yet life still lingers in thee, and puts forth  
Proof not contemptible of what she can,  
Even where death predominates    The spring  
Finds thee not less alive to her sweet force  
Than yonder upstarts of the neighbouring wood,  
So much thy juniors, who their birth received  
Half a millennium since the date of thine

But since, although well qualified by age  
To teach, no spirit dwells in thee, nor voice  
May be expected from thee, seated here  
On thy distorted root, with hearers none,  
Or prompter, save the scene, I will perform  
Myself the oracle, and will discourse  
In my own ear such matter as I may  
One man alone, the father of us all,  
Drew not his life from woman    never grazed  
With mute unconsciousness of what he saw  
On all around him    learned not by degrees,  
Nor ow'd articulation to his ear  
But, moulded by his Maker into man,  
At once upstood intelligent, survey'd  
All creatures with precision, understood  
Their purport, uses, properties, assigned  
To each his name significant, and, filled  
With love and wisdom, rendered back to Heaven  
In praise harmonious the first air he drew  
He was excused the penalties of dull

Minority    No tutor charged his hand  
With the thought tracing quill, or tasked his mind  
With problems    History, not wanted yet,  
Leaned on her elbow, watching Time, whose course,  
Eventful, should supply her with a theme

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 Far from the world, O Lord, I flee  
 From school to Cam or Isis, and thence home

God moves in a mysterious way  
 Gray dawn appears the sportsman and his trun

Hackney d in business, wearied at that oar  
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 Hatred and vengeance,—my eternal portion  
 Hayley, thy tenderness fraternal, shown  
 Heaven speed the canvas, gallantly unfurled  
 He is the happy man, whose life even now  
 He lives who lives to God, alone  
 Here Johnson lies, a sage by all allowed  
 Here lies one who never drew  
 Here lies, whom hound did ne'er pursue  
 Here unmolested, through whatever sign  
 He who sits from day to day  
 Hic etiam jacet  
 How oft, my Delia, since our last farewell  
 How oft upon yon eminence our pace  
 How various his employments whom the world

If ever thou hast felt another's pain  
 I have loved the rural walk through lanes  
 I know the mind that feels indeed the fire  
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